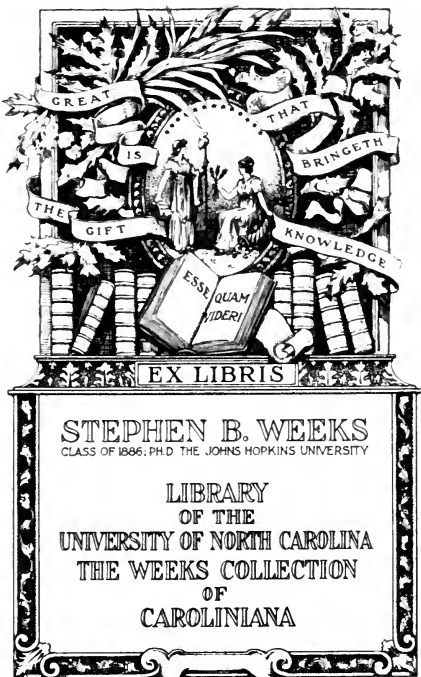


**In Memoriam**

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**WILLIAM HENRY BRANSON**

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UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL



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THE NORTH CAROLINA COLLECTION

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John W. Brown

# In Memoriam.

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WILLIAM HENRY BRANSON.

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BORN MAY 23, 1860.

DIED MARCH 24, 1899.

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PRINTED BY  
**JOSEPH J. STONE,**  
GREENSBORO, N. C.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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**I**N obedience to requests from his family, the materials for this volume have been collected and put into permanent form in order that the many friends and acquaintances of WILLIAM HENRY BRANSON might come into possession of the leading facts of his busy and godly life, and the tragic circumstances of his sad and untimely death.

He was a great force in every phase of life which he touched, and the lessons of such a history cannot fail to become an inspiration to the young and a source of consolation to those who have reached mature years.

The compiler of this volume knew MR. BRANSON for fifteen years, and feels glad to acknowledge here the influence of such an acquaintance upon his own life. He would record in this fitting place his obligation to that departed friend for many words of cheer and encouragement, as well as much material aid, in the delicate and responsible work which has been placed in his hands.

Now, let the words of those who knew him best and loved him greatest tell the simple story of his active and faithful life. The work of gathering up these fragments has not been a burden, but a labor of love.

DRED PEACOCK.

*Greensboro Female College, August 28th, 1899.*

## SYMPATHETIC LINES.

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To the Bereaved Relatives and Friends of William  
Henry Branson.

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There was no cloud across the sky,  
    To tell the gathering gloom of night,  
No shadow dimmed the light of day,  
    The morning dawned all fair and bright.

No shade nor shadow seemed to lurk,  
    About the threshold of the door;  
No voice was heard to tell of one  
    Whose passing out would be no more.

When evening came, a Presence grim  
    Had passed into the house so bright,  
And silenced, aye, the joy of home  
    And stilled forever hearts so light.

'Twas thus it seemed to those who heard,  
    That one they knew had passed away,  
So much of life, and strength, and hope,  
    Was taken in one fleeting day!

Yet is his life forever done  
    Because no more we hear his voice?  
Will not his influence live on?  
    O mourning hearts, for this, rejoice!

O sorrowing ones, it hath been said,  
    “He liveth long, who liveth well.”  
The hearts he cheered, the good he did,  
    Eternity alone can tell.

I knew him in his sunny youth,  
    His father’s pride, his mother’s joy,  
And others learned on him to lean,  
    His life began when but a boy.

His work was wrought, his mission filled.  
    Then came the message swift and sure;  
On earth at morn, at eve in heaven,  
    The faithful shall fore’er endure.

Look up sad hearts, amid your gloom,  
    With grief and sorrow overborne,  
And hear the Saviour’s loving voice  
    Say sweetly, “Blest are they that mourn.”

“They shall be comforted,” He saith,  
    His promises are ever sure,  
Nor depth nor height shall separate,  
    His word forever shall endure.

MRS. E. M. ANDERSON.

*Durham, N. C., March 27th, 1899.*



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

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BY REV. JOHN C. KILGO, D. D.

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Very few American families can trace their ancestry beyond three or four generations. This is due to the lack of a historical spirit among the early settlers of a country. They make no records, and only vague traditions carry their histories down to other generations. When the Branson family came to America cannot be accurately determined. It is, however, certain that early in the eighteenth century Thomas Branson came from England and settled in Chatham county, N. C. This makes the Branson family one of the old families of North Carolina, and identifies them with all the periods of the State's growth.

William Henry Branson belonged to the fifth generation from Thomas Branson. William's father was named Thomas, doubtless for the original Branson and was born in Randolph county, near Asheboro, in the year 1800. For four generations the Branson family remained in this section of the State, a fact which indicates an indisposition to rove from point to point in search of eaiser fortunes.

Thomas Branson, the father of William H. Branson, was twice married; the first time to Miss Mary Lewellyn, the second time to Mrs. Prescott,

who was a Miss Buck. William was the only child by this second wife. He was born at Cedar Falls, Randolph county, May 23, 1860. His father was a blacksmith, a vocation of large importance in the first half of the nineteenth century. The blacksmith was then a manufacturer, making not only all the implements of farming, but all the pieces of iron furniture in the best homes. Longfellow's "Village Blacksmith" commemorates the true dignity and character of the hero of the anvil. So Thomas Branson was a central figure in the industry of his community. He is described as a man with a large and erect frame, strong intellect, and noble character. He was a man of deep convictions, and held to them with unshaken fidelity; he was energetic and honest in all business transactions, while his genial nature drew about him a host of friends. One who knew him said, "Never was there a more upright man than Thomas Branson." His second wife was a woman of genial nature, and very full of energy. Their only son, William Henry, got a good start in his parents, and his record fully sustained their character in the larger world of activity to which he belonged.

Thomas Branson died when William was very young. This, joined with the extremely poor educational facilities, gave young William no opportunity to attend any other than a local school. Nevertheless, he succeeded in grasping the principles of arithmetic before he was twelve years old, for he

never attended school after that age. Nature had endowed him with large mental powers, and from the earliest he seemed to have superior control over his faculties of mind. Young men who cite such instances to defend their indifference to educational opportunities, should first be sure that nature has extended to them such a beneficent hand as it held out to him. He not only had faculties, but they had empetus, and he was always learning. Minds run down and growth is arrested, but he had the genius of endless growth.

His half sister, Miss Jennie Prescott, married Mr. J. A. Odell, a merchant in the town of Greensboro, N. C. At the age of twelve he went to live with them as a member of the family. This was a new era in William's life. Mr. Odell is not only a man of stalwart character, but his business genius puts him among the business leaders of the South Atlantic States. Young Branson had the life of this man to touch him from the intimate relation of the home at his most impressible age. This may be called good fortune by some men; it was destiny to William Branson. He went into the Odell home, and the Odell home went into him. He worked in the store as a clerk, and developed his powers to deal with large and varied classes of men. A young boy behind the counter of a busy store is not in the poorest school. To succeed as a clerk requires energetic study and large self-control. William succeeded.

He did not receive a salary for the first four years. He was a member of the Odell home, and was cared for as a son. His fidelity to the home relations was so marked that his sister was never forced to punish him. Mr. and Mrs. Odell always knew his plans, and as long as he was with them, he never left the home without their knowledge and approval. To him manliness and honor were inseparable, and freedom was obedience to duty and truth. It is no surprise that the confidence which grew up in those years never diminished in later years.

William was sixteen years old when the Centennial Exhibition came on in Philadelphia. Mr. Odell, as an expression of appreciation of him and his work, took him to Philadelphia. This opportunity to look out on the world and feel the throb of its energy and genius, meant much to this lad of sixteen years. He did not return home the same boy; he did not live again in the same world; he came back a larger boy in a larger world. The country school in Randolph county, the Odell home and store, and the trip to Philadelphia, and at the same time a short visit to New York, were the schools in which William H. Branson was educated. In the first, he gained access to books; in the second, access to business and society; in the third, access to the impulses of the world. These three attainments in the possession of a highly endowed man



aggregated no small capital with which to begin life.

When William returned to Greensboro from Philadelphia, he had his wardrobe and fifteen cents in cash. From this time he became an employee of Mr. Odell, on a salary of fifteen dollars a month. Thus he entered on his business career. In this day of restless youth, impatient for a rapid rise to easy and lucrative positions, the history of William H. Branson is a sharp reproof. He began at what men call the "bottom round," not because those who loved him could not have elevated him at once to a higher position, but because their wisdom suggested a better plan. Men rule best who have served most faithfully in every sphere to be ruled. Young Cornelius Vanderbilt is a common laborer in the shops of the New York Central Railroad, in order that he may be a better president of the system. Rapid progress means early bankruptcy, and against this calamity young Branson was trained. As the years passed his salary grew, so, having learned to live on a small salary, he knew how to save from a larger one. The best product of education is the control that it gives a man of all the powers of his nature. To think accurately is not enough. Unless a man can master his moral desires, high thinking will prove to be a disastrous thinking. William Branson had been trained to deny useless desires, and he was no longer in the way of his own success.

At the organization of the Durham Cotton Mill, in 1884, Mr. J. A. Odell was elected President, and William H. Branson was chosen Secretary and Treasurer. Young Branson was practically placed at the head of this new enterprise, for through him Mr. Odell directed the business. At this time the cotton manufacturing interest entered on the period of expansion in the South Atlantic States. The growth was rapid, but the fact that untrained men were necessarily placed at the head of new mills, made it a critical period. Not only were new markets to be opened, and new business affiliations formed, but unexperienced labor was to be trained, and new social relations were to be adjusted. It was into the midst of these problems that Mr. Branson was suddenly thrown. He met them with an assuring faith. He was born to lead men. He knew how to plan a work, and to organize and inspire his forces. No crisis could throw him into a spasm of excitement, but he was calmest when the ordinary man was most excited. During the business panic of the first years of this decade, he showed no timidity, but maintained that stability which alone can secure the integrity of business. Business genius is rare enough, and great enough to command the admiration of all true men, and only a moral quackery discounts it. It is as foolish to think that every man can build or control large business enterprises, as it is to expect every man to write Shakespeare's Hamlet, or Goethe's Faust.

This talent belongs to the few, just as the poetic genius is a rare talent. Too much may be attributed to opportunity, or so-called "good fortune," but the real opportunity is the man. The modern teachers of economy rest their hopes too much in natural agencies, expecting to produce wealth by changing circumstances. The problem is to be solved in the man, not in the conditions, for the man who lacks the power to control circumstances lacks the very element of success. Mr. Branson did not wait for times to change and conditions to become better, he changed the conditions. The real leader of men will never lack men to lead. By the force of moral energy the public mind moves about him as an appointed center. He seeks nothing; everything seeks him. The large number of enterprises that sought the fostering care of Mr. Branson illustrates the truthfulness of the statement. He was a Trustee of Trinity College, a Member of the Executive Committee of Trinity College, Trustee of Greensboro Female College, Director of the Fidelity Bank, Secretary and Treasurer of Durham Cotton Mill and Pearl Cotton Mill, Director of the Durham and Oxford Railroad, Director of Odell Manufacturing Company, Treasurer of the Joint Board of Finance of the North Carolina Conference, Steward of Carr Church, a Trustee of Church property, and associated in some way with various other institutions. These were not honorary positions, but enterprises which

sought the wise direction of this strong man. So, they were to him responsibilities, and got from him closest study and faithful direction. In the meetings of these Boards he was always active. Mr. Branson's success as a business man cannot be attributed to any one element of character. He was a man whose faculties compassed large and varied spheres, so that he put into his plans ideas gathered from many points of view and protected on every side.

Men who have large aptitudes for business rarely develop social tastes. There is an antagonism between the two spheres, and only men of great adaptability can so harmonize them as to make them serve each other. The business man regards a social occasion as a waste of time, and when forced into a social assembly, finds himself cramped and vexed. Close calculations and stern facts injure, if they do not destroy, those sentiments upon which society rests. The loss of faculties is a common calamity, especially the more unselfish faculties that cannot be traded in the markets. Mr. Branson was an exception to this rule. He could lay aside the calculations of the office, dismiss from his mind the conditions of the market, shut out the roar of machinery, and throw himself with genial enthusiasm into a lawn party of his little girl, or a social function of largest proportions. He was not dragged into these; he had a highly developed social nature. Three things

made him social. He was naturally a man of deep and refined sympathies, and could not, therefore, find his life's satisfaction in himself. The second cause is found in the genial associations of the Odell home. In it he had his natural social sentiments trained and gratified. The third cause was a happy marriage. December 17, 1885, he was married to Miss Clara Sergeant, of Greensboro, N. C. Two lives may make one great life, or they may destroy each other. The union in married life is not a legal agreement, to which society sets its approval. It is a mystical unity, where two thoughts and two impulses so fuse into each other as to consume all separate identity in a new and larger expression. This, and this alone, is marriage. Legal contracts and ecclesiastical ceremonies cannot so unite what nature has forever divorced. The law of congeniality is as rigid as the law of gravity, and ruin can only come from an attempt to reverse it. Forced nature is wrecked history. *William Branson and Clara Sergeant were married.* She was to him the ideal woman. Genial, sympathetic, loving, and faithful, she was to him a poem, the passion of whose movement was a divine impulse, keeping alive the diviner sides of his nature. With him, she could never degenerate into a soft social show; with her, he could never become a hardened man of the market. Society is at its best, or its worst in the home. In this house it was at its best. Mr. Branson had his business

day, but when that ended he gave himself to his family. The city of Durham will not forget the evening rides he took with his family. The sight was a sermon on "how to love and how to be loved." Little William, his only son, was sent to the home of a neighbor on the morning of the accident that robbed him of a father, and was not allowed to return home till night. He was brought into his mother's room just at the hour of the day when the family circle was at its best. The little fellow at a moment felt the distress of his father's absence, and his first utterance was, "Mamma, where is papa?" His little life had its joys in the hours of a father's presence in the home. Little Annie's parties, his wife's social occasions, companionship with his friends, and the annual social functions of Trinity College, all received his best contributions of joy and gladness.

His social nature did him great service in his business relations. It not only gave him ready access to the sympathies of men with whom he had transactions, but it saved his business plans and methods from the monotony of hard and cold mechanism. Between the manager and the laborer there must be something more than a contract. Otherwise, trickery and suspicions arise that hinder, if they do not ruin, an enterprise. Legislation can do very little, if it can do anything, to prevent friction between capital and labor. Likely, it has created more friction than it has prevented. The

friction has its rise in that margin which lies outside of legal control, a sphere which modern sociologists have ignored. There must be a point of personal contact between labor and capital, and no increase in wages will ever act as a substitute for this personal and moral bond. Labor wants the inspiration of personal regard; capital wants the assurance of personal confidence. The necessity is a common necessity. Mr. Branson solved the problem, just as very many other wise men have solved it. He touched the lives of those who worked under him with a sincere sympathy and regard. He did not patronize them, as he did not patronize any man. He never called them his "operatives," "hands" or "laborers," but "our people." This was not a conventionalism, for he held them in the high esteem of kinship, and never met them on any other basis. The entire community organized around him with perfect confidence. Free himself from the feelings of lordship, they were free from the sense of serfdom. Friction is not possible under such conditions, and the sorrow of "our people" when this man was smitten down, attested the wisdom and sincerity of his leadership.

When Mr. Branson was seventeen years old he was converted at a meeting held in West Market Methodist church, in Greensboro, N. C. At the same time he joined the Methodist church. His parents were Methodists, and his associations after

he left the home of his mother, preserved in him the faith of the household. He was never a bad boy, and knew nothing of "sowing wild oats," an expression used to apologize for the unnecessary sins of youth. The most intimate companion of his boyhood tells with joy that he never heard young Branson use an impure word, or relate an unclean joke. Upon this foundation of purity and integrity rested his faith in the power of Christ to save him. Into his church membership he put all of his energies. He was a great churchman, studying the doctrines and polity of his church, and using his knowledge for its best interests. He was no bigot, but he was loyal at all times to the church of his choice. In every matter affecting the work of his church he supported an aggressive policy, and took a broad view of every movement. With the ethics of narrow and selfish men he had no sympathy. Though young, he was one of the most potent factors in the North Carolina Conference. In his own church, his pastor found him an ideal layman, true to his vows, active in all church work, and the center of greatest influence. He was not only active in the business of the Church, but in revival services gave his energies to the one work of saving his fellowman. As treasurer of the Joint Board of Finance, the entire financial work of the year in the North Carolina Conference passed under his review. He was always present at the sessions of the Conference, never



allowing business to keep him away, or to call him home before his work was finished. No man ever heard him complain that the church work interfered with his business. He did not carry his factories to the Conference sessions, and did not fret to return to them. Such fidelity commands confidence, and his church was glad to honor him. Some men use church honors for selfish ends, and seek them for distant aims. Mr. Branson sought nothing; everything sought him. Twice he was a member of the General Conference; the first time at the session of 1894, in Memphis, Tennessee, and as an alternate in the last session, which met in Baltimore, Maryland, May, 1898. In this body he was an important legislator. Broad-minded, aggressive, and wise, he threw his influence where he judged best for the life and progress of the church. His faith could not be disturbed by those alarmists whose mental horizons were tortured with imaginary storms. "Their wild dreams do not disturb me," he would say. "Our Bishops are wise and godly men and we can risk them," was fundamental with him. Some men are monumental characters whose records impart assurance and give great stability to cardinal truth. In the church, William H. Branson was such a character.

He was a true man. His appearance spoke out the magnificence of his character. Tall and erect, weighing nearly two hundred pounds, with a large

head, broad brow, bright and expressive eye, strong features, and noble movement, he was the embodiment of high honor and noble impulses. He had the model figure of a hero. God does not build such temples in which to house bats; the occupant of such a divine structure has exalted rights which, if obeyed, makes him God's nobleman. William H. Branson obeyed them. He was just reaching up to that period of life when everything is full of glad prophecies. All the years of his life were years of apparent preparation, and his friends rejoiced that the depth and breadth of the foundation measured an immense future. In the glow of these hopes, death came to him while he was in the path of duty, the only path in which he ever made a foot-print. A darker shadow never fell on any community than the one that came to the city of Durham when, on the twenty-fourth day of March, 1899, William H. Branson, by a fearful accident, was taken away. In him seemed to be unborn history. It will have its birth in higher realms, for there is no cessation of life. Noble powers may not have sufficient time in this life, they will get it in the life beyond.

## THE FUNERAL.

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The funeral services over the remains of the late W. H. Branson, who died Friday evening from the effects of terrible scalding received in the pump house at the East Durham mill, were conducted from Trinity Church, Saturday afternoon, March 25th, at 2 o'clock.

Quite a crowd of the friends of the family filled the church and listened to the words of commendation of the character of the dead man. The services were conducted by Rev. D. N. Caviness, pastor of Carr Church, of which deceased was one of the most prominent members.

Revs. G. A. Oglesby, Cole, Langston, Yates, and Kilgo took part in the services. Dr. Kilgo, president of Trinity College, of which Mr. Branson was one of the Trustees, made a short talk on the character of the deceased, and paid a beautiful tribute to his memory. He said:

“A good man is not an accident, but is the product of the divine hand. He is made after the plans of God, and all the forces that enter into his life are divine forces. Such men as Enoch, Joseph, Moses and David did not spring up by chance. God thought them out, and they have their truest explanation in a fellowship with Him. So the good men who are in the world today are more than

fortunate men. It is correct to speak of the good man as 'the man of God.' He is in a true sense an incarnation, and the divine element in him raises him to this high distinction.

"The making of a good man is the most absorbing work of God in the government of the earth. This is the highest aim to be reached, and into it have been thrown all the energies of the universe. 'All power in heaven and earth has been given into my hands,' said Christ. The only use he has for this power is to produce a good and great man. He put into this work all the resources of his own nature, and laid the foundation in his own death. All that goes to make history he governs to the end of making a good man.

"Besides these outside elements that enter into the character of a good man, he contributes all of his own energies to the same end. His self-sacrifice and consecration cannot be measured. In his history there is much that is tragedy. The secret struggles through which he maintains his integrity are the sublimest scenes of human triumph. The closet of the good man could disclose the story of bloodiest conflicts.

"In every good man there is some leading element of character. One idea rules. Only Christ was able to compass every trait of holiness. Other men represent in a high degree only a single ruling trait. Job is renowned for his patience; Nehemiah instructs the world in holy patriotism, and

Paul in heroic faith. In an effort to discover the supreme element in the character of my friend, William. H. Branson, I found none so prominent as his power to love. His life grew out of this. When it first came to the throne of moral consciousness, I cannot say. It, however, must have appeared at an early period, as there were no marks of envy and hate visible on his face. His brow was smooth; his eye beamed with hope; his form was erect; his words were pure; and his spirit full of gladness. Hatred leaves its marks, but he bore none of them.

“All of the relations of life testify to his power to love. His home had its foundations in a loyal heart. He married because he loved the woman who was to share his life. The children that came into his house were the offspring of a holy love, and the partners of all he had. No business, however urgent and intricate, could make him lose sight of the simplest joys of his family. With peculiar emphasis he spoke of them as, ‘My wife and children.’ The emphasis was on ‘my.’ I can never forget a few hours spent with him in the city of Norfolk, on our return from the last session of our Annual Conference. After arranging at the hotel, we went to stroll on the streets. His children seemed to be with him. He entered a jewelry store, and, with the enthusiasm of a lover, made purchases for each member of the home. He said to me, ‘This is the only trading I ever do with

genuine enthusiasm. 'What I buy for my wife and children gives my greatest pleasure.' It is no ordinary man who can lay aside companions and the business of a great factory, to buy a ring for a precious child. He literally threw his heart with its smoking heat into the lap of his family, and their highest inspiration was the integrity of his love.

"As the head of a large business, employing many men and women, he was true to his nature. He ruled by the love he had for every employee. They had access to him, and his cheerful face assured them in their task. There was no show of lordship in his relations to them. He never spoke of them as 'employees,' nor as 'hands,' but always as 'our people.' He felt a kinship which he was always glad to acknowledge, and this was true under all circumstances. They were 'our people' if they worked, 'our people' when they voted, 'our people' when they worshipped, and 'our people' when they went on excursions of pleasure. He solved the labor problem about which so much is said. He did not appeal to legislation for new laws, nor to quacks for new theories, but in the 'our people' feeling he made friction impossible. William H. Branson was himself the solution of those calamities, because he made such problems an impossibility. Laborers do not so much want more money as they want more

personal sympathy and interest. All who labored with him knew him as a 'good man.'

"In his church work, to which he was supremely loyal, in his general business duties, and in his social fellowship, he was the same man with a great heart of love. He was never in such a hurry as to overlook the humblest friend, but always greeted him with a glad smile and an honest hand grasp. In the conference room he made change for the humblest member with as much delight as he reported the total financial work of the year. •

"This element of his character gave him great stability. Nothing is stronger than love, and no blast of outward storm can move it from its foundations. So he stood. Amid business reverses and crises, social ruptures and antagonisms, political heat and warfare, and all forms of calamity, he stood as immovable as the stone of an old Greek god. His face was towards the sunrise, and with an unflinching step he went forward where other men stood paralyzed in the face of impending dangers. Such a man is the anchor of his age. With arms thrown about the eternal rocks, he holds on amid sweeping storms and crashing billows, and saves a thousand men from driving, in the crazed timidity, on rocks and reefs. Who ever saw William H. Branson surrender his cause? Who ever saw him moved from his purposes? Yet, who ever heard him quarrel with the timid? His great stand was his appeal and his reproof. Full

of love, full of faith, full of hope, full of noble aims, full of unborn history, in a moment this 'good man' has been taken from us, but his memory and influences must abide.

“The good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children.” Science has disclosed no sublimer truth than the conservation of forces. No energy has been lost by any change of form. It passes from form to form in its mission in the material universe, and defies everywhere all forces to destroy it. Our religion holds the same sublime truth in a far sublimer realm. No good life is ever lost. ‘By it, he being dead, yet speaketh,’ makes righteous Abel a working force of the centuries. William H. Branson is our heritage.

“To his children he leaves the inheritance of a good man. Poor and mean, indeed, is the man who does not find joy in a noble ancestry. Mere titles of the empty honors of society, and patchwork of spurious political fame are not to be counted. But the purity of life, the magnanimity of spirit, the integrity of conscience, the record of industry, and the esteem of honest men is a legacy that might enthuse an angel, and should always give a sense of honor to descendants. William H. Branson lifted the family name. I care not how high it was when he was born, it is higher since he lived. He left no suspicion on it, and those who will answer to it in the future cannot blush because he once



answered to it. This is the highest heritage he leaves his children.

“Our city must share in this legacy. He left a record that has standard value for every business man in our community, and especially for the young business men of Durham. He began at what we call the bottom, and by energy and integrity rose before middle life to a success of the noblest order. Those who live along the streets he passed in going to his places of business will not soon forget the regularity with which his trips were made. Death overtook him attending to business. Let me exhort every young business man in our midst to treasure the memory of my friend, William H. Branson. His only trick in trade was the genius of honesty and the fidelity of energy.

“To his church he leaves the highest legacy. Our religion has its unanswerable logic in the purity of its representatives, and to them must the church always make its appeal. Our North Carolina Methodism will hold the memory of this good man as a sacred treasure. He loved his church and was never too absorbed with business to serve it. The most arduous week's work of the entire year was the one he devoted to the Annual Conference session. Day and night he labored on the financial reports, and these received the accurate attention given to the business of his factories. No problem presented itself to the church which did not secure

his fullest interest. He loved the ministry, and by every honorable token showed this love. Our ministry ought to receive a new impetus from the life of this good man. The laity through him have been called to an exalted life.

“We mourn his departure, and pray for the torn hearts of the home from which he has been taken. Mysteries on mysteries enter into the movements of the world, and human thought is often dazed by insoluble incidents. We all stand in the shadow of such an incident. We refer the revelation of it to the day of final disclosures, and wait with some degree of patience for a deeper insight into the history of men.

“My painful duty at this hour has been performed. I say painful because my own heart bleeds streams of sorrow, and my emotions have been hard to control. William H. Branson was my friend. You will pardon me, while here by the side of his silent form, I give expression to personal feelings. In all the days of my joys and triumphs he was among the gladdest, and amid all of my struggles and toils, he was among the foremost to assist. Taken out of my life, and away from my side, I will return to my tasks with the feelings that they will be heavier. When a man is so suddenly and sorely robbed of a member of that inner circle upon which he leans for strength, courage suffers, and the sense of disappointed hopes comes over him. I never planted a shrub or flower at Trinity Park

that did not interest him; I never administered any discipline that did not call out his sincerest concern, and I never had a dream of Trinity's growth that did not enthuse him. You need not be amazed when I tell you that he had the key to my inner thoughts, and knew all the plans of my work. He loved our College, and we all feel sorely the loss that has come to us.

"This good man has gone from us. His face was ever toward the celestial city, into which he has already entered. We will soon put him away in the silent tomb, but with assurance that on the day of final triumph, when the ascended Lord will descend to claim the royalty of his death, our friend will come forth in the glory of the resurrection, and enter the kingdom of his Lord, and share in all the infinitudes of its wealth."

After the services at the church were over, the remains were taken to the Southern depot, where a special train was in waiting to convey them to Greensboro. Some fifty or sixty of the friends of the bereaved family accompanied them to Greensboro and witnessed the interment. The following relatives and friends attended the funeral: J. A. Odell, George and Will Sergeant, and Mr. Ireland, Mrs. Branson's father, B. E. Sergeant, of Greensboro, and J. G. Brown, of Raleigh. There were a profusion of flowers contributed by friends of the family. The pall bearers were: F. M. Sharp, John F. Wiley, F. L. Fuller, R. G. Jones, Y. E.

Smith, J. G. Brown and C. H. Ireland. It is said that Mr. Branson, wishing to see his family left in comfortable circumstances, had insurance on his life amounting to some \$28,000.—*Durham Daily Sun*.

#### FLORAL TRIBUTES.

The floral tributes were numerous and handsome. Not only did his neighbors and friends in Durham attest their love and sympathy by strewing his "pathway to the tomb" with beautiful flowers, many from distant cities also gave expression in a similar way to the tender regard they felt for their loved and trusted friend. Besides innumerable offerings of individuals in Durham and other places, were noted the following designs sent by the various institutions with which he was connected:

Employees of the Fidelity Bank, Wreath.

Employees Southern Railway, Cross.

Durham Conservatory of Music, Harp.

President and Faculty of Trinity College, Cross, Heart and Anchor, suspended.

Faculty Greensboro Female College, Large Boquet Bride's Roses.

## FROM THE PRESS.

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[ *Durham Daily Sun.* ]

A distressing accident occurred this morning about 10 o'clock, at the East Durham Cotton Mills, whereby two gentlemen were badly scalded, and are in a very dangerous condition.

Messrs. W. H. Branson and J. C. Mathes were in a pump-house, that pumps water to the engine. By some means a large steam pipe, about five inches in diameter, bursted, enveloping these two gentlemen in a cloud of scalding steam.

Messrs. Branson and Mathes were both badly burned. Mr. Branson's injuries are thought to be the worst. He is badly scalded about the face, head and body. So badly was he burned about the face that the skin peeled off. He also had his hands painfully cut in breaking out some glass in a window in an endeavor to call for assistance.

Mr. Mathes is pretty badly burned about the face and eyes. It is thought he may lose his eyesight. Mathes, after an unsuccessful effort, finally succeeded in getting the door of the house open and made his exit in this way.

So powerful was the force of the explosion that a hole was blown through the brick wall of the

house, about five feet in diameter. The pipe that burst was above the heads of the two gentlemen. Had it been lower nothing could have prevented them being killed outright.

As soon as possible, physicians were telephoned for, and also trained nurses from the Watts Hospital. Drs. Manning, A. G. Carr, W. N. Hicks, N. P. Boddie and other physicians reached the scene as quickly as possible.

Willing hands removed Mr. Branson to the company's office, and Mr. Mathes to his residence near by. Physicians and nurses have not left these gentlemen since the accident took place. Everything is being done that medical skill and science can suggest to alleviate their sufferings. It was a horrible accident, and the dangers these men underwent while shut up like rats in a trap, is enough to make one shudder.

Ever since the first news of the accident reached up town, inquiries have been frequent as to the condition of the two men who were so badly injured. The news spread like wild-fire this morning, and the announcement fell like a pall upon many hearts.

At this writing both of the injured men are conscious. It is impossible as yet to determine fully the extent of their injuries.

[*Durham Daily Sun.*]

When the *Sun* went to press on Friday afternoon, Messrs. W. H. Branson and J. C. Mathes, who were so badly injured in the horrible accident that occurred at the East Durham Cotton Mills, were conscious. Mr. Branson, who was known to be the worst injured, lived till about 5:15 o'clock in the afternoon, when he fell asleep as peacefully as a child, to wake no more on earth.

Hearts are bowed down with grief and sorrow on account of the terrific blow that has fallen. The entire community feels deeply the sad calamity. Nothing in recent years has occurred that so shocked the people of Durham and other towns. The *Sun* hardly knows how to write of such a sad, heart-breaking occurrence, and of the great and irreparable loss sustained by the death of Mr. Branson.

William H. Branson was about thirty-nine years of age. He moved to Durham about thirteen or fourteen years ago. During his boyhood and early manhood he clerked in a store in Greensboro. Afterwards he moved to Durham and took charge of the management of the East Durham Cotton Mills, which he managed with great fidelity, business ability and skill. Under his skilful and wise guidance, the East Durham Cotton Mills have grown and prospered wonderfully. So marked has been the growth of these mills, that it was

deemed an imperative necessity to almost double their capacity. Besides having the management of these mills, Mr. Branson was concerned in a number of other enterprises, notably the Pearl Mills in North Durham, and he was also a stockholder in the proposed new cotton mill at Roxboro. He was secretary and treasurer of the East Durham Cotton Mills.

In addition to being concerned in a number of cotton mill enterprises, he held several positions of trust and honor in other industries.

Mr. Branson several years ago married Miss Clara Sergeant, daughter of Mr. B. E. Sergeant, a well known and prominent manufacturer of Greensboro. Mrs. Branson, with two children, a son and a daughter, survive him.

Deceased was a member of the Methodist church, being the leading member at Carr church, East Durham. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of Trinity College, and held several important positions connected with church work. He was frequently elected as a delegate to District and Annual Conferences.

The following were among those who arrived in the city this morning, having been called here on account of Mr. Branson's death: J. A. Odell, George and Will Sergeant and Mr. Ireland, of Greensboro; J. M. Odell, of Concord, and Joseph G. Brown, of Raleigh. Mr. B. E. Sergeant, of



Greensboro, father of Mrs. Branson, arrived in the city last evening on through freight train.

The funeral services were conducted this afternoon from Trinity Church. Revs. Dr. J. C. Kilgo, D. N. Caviness, G. D. Langston and others participated.

The following gentlemen acted as pall-bearers and escorted the remains to the Southern depot, where a special train was in waiting to carry the funeral party to Greensboro: F. M. Sharpe, F. L. Fuller, John F. Wily, R. G. Jones, Y. E. Smith, Jos. G. Brown and C. H. Ireland.

The special train left Durham about 2:50 o'clock on its journey to Greensboro.

May a loving Heavenly Father sustain the grief-stricken widow and fatherless children in the well nigh crushing blow that has descended upon them.

The sympathies and the prayers from hundreds of homes throughout North Carolina go up to Him that doeth all things, that he may give the bereaved ones strength to bear up under the heavy load of anguish under which they struggle. They have the consolation of knowing that although their loved one was suddenly snatched away, yet he was ready to go when the Master called him. O, that we could push ajar the gates of life, stand within, and understand the mysteries of Providence! But we must be content, and, unmurmuring, pass under the rod of "Him who doeth all things well" according to

His good pleasure. We know not now, and dare not question, this dispensation.

Farewell, kind friend, citizen and Christian gentleman. May all the bereaved loved ones, relatives, friends and acquaintances, strive to meet him and clasp hands in the beautiful home above. May God keep and sustain those left behind until they shall all meet again around the Master's great white throne, there to be an inseparable and undivided gathering for ever and ever.

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[*Durham Daily Sun.*]

Upon the ideal union of a beautiful home in Durham, a long, dark shadow, even the shadow of death, has fallen. A devoted husband and father has been removed—taken away so suddenly—fairest skies turned to darkness and songs to silence.

W. H. Branson is dead!

Calamities and death follow each other like the waves on ocean's beach, and overwhelm us in sorrow. Earth has no emblem and heaven no sign, save the sacrificial blood on Calvary's rocks, to show us one ray of hope and cheer in the deep gloom now hanging over our fair city.

Yesterday morning two men, in the strength of vigorous manhood, with no sorrows to fleck their joys, no shadows flitting across the day that dawned so brightly. Today one sleeps the last

sleep and the other languishes upon a bed of pain, between life and death.

William Henry Branson is gone. For what purpose he was called away in the midst of his splendid manhood and usefulness we know not, and yet cannot fully appreciate the fact that his presence will be seen among us no more. The whole community mourns. He will be missed in the church, of which he was a member, in scattering seeds of kindness—his last act being a donation of a bolt of cloth to the orphans. He will be missed in our business circles where he was an energetic factor. He will be missed as a neighbor by those who came under his ministrations. His memory in the home, in the affections of his wife and the hearts of his many friends and relations will be cherished with peculiar sweetness.

After all he but sleeps!

“There is no death! The stars go down  
To rise upon some other shore!  
And bright in heaven’s jeweled crown  
They shine forevermore!”

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[*R. G. Jones, in Durham Daily Sun.*]

The sudden death of William H. Branson is a severe shock to those who love and honor him. It is difficult for me, with the tumultuous feelings of the moment, to attempt a portrayal of this good man. My relations with him as an employee—

which were for a period of several years—were as pleasant as one could wish, and I consider it an honor to have associated with this man of many virtues. His walks and works were such, that not only I, but all men who knew his golden worth of heart and head, respected and admired him. He earned from me a close friendship and a profound admiration. One of the chief virtues of Mr. Branson's character was firmness, and a determination to do what he believed to be right.

In his domestic relations as husband and father, it is difficult to speak of him in moderation. There could not be a man more devoted to his family, and he was always doing something to make home happy. He revered woman, and counted among his many friends noble women in this and other towns.

As a business man, Mr. Branson possessed rare genius. His indefatigable energy, and high sense of honor, won for him the utmost confidence of his associates. He was always kind and respectful to his subordinates, and it seems hard that he should be taken away when life was so bright and prosperous.

W. H. Branson, honest, dauntless, doing his duty as he saw it, fell indomitable at his post.

Let us give his memory all honor. From our rolls a great name has departed and a man has gone from our midst. Human thought has lost a teacher; his friends and acquaintances a wise guide.

[*P., in Durham Daily Sun.*]

Our religious institutions were all well filled yesterday. Many were the conversations as to the sad death of W. H. Branson. He was a sample. He used hospitality, kindness, and forbearance to one another without grudging. He received from his birth the gift of a gentleman and manifested the same all through the various multiplications of his business life, which is too well known for me to comment upon. With the most subordinate under his jurisdiction he was at all times and under all circumstances kind and affable. When you met him socially or on business he wore a smile of character upon his countenance, justly inviting all to believe in his integrity and justice to his fellow man. He was one of the few men that I never heard ought against in any particular.

But a few years ago, I have it from good authority, he took hold of the business oars of life in Greensboro, with a steady, energetic pull and push from that day to the day of his death. He left behind him a business trace in life which but few men can brag of. At the bottom of the ladder he commenced a poor boy, and at the time of his death, though young in years, he stood amongst the wealthy. He was held in the highest esteem by his fellow men. Dr. Kilgo justly said in his eulogistic words of him that the colleges, the churches and the business institutions had lost help in the death of Mr. Branson.

Every man, woman and child in North Durham, coming under his touch, either in business or socially, will miss his ever welcoming smiles.

The writer has had five years knowledge of him advisedly and in business transactions and he was always courteous and plain spoken. No one could come in close business touch with Mr. Branson without loving and respecting him. We will so much miss his daily business trips to our town. "Our people," as he used to call those about the mills, will this morning, and every morning to come, miss the elastic step, the broad smile of encouragement he wore each morning through the mills. May our loss be his gain. His wife and two children, may the shadowing wings of angels ever guide their pathway through life, and when the final morn shall dawn may they be received amongst the redeemed, father, mother, sister and brother, all singing Hosannah's to the most high God.

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[ *Raleigh News and Observer.* ]

The news of the death of Mr. Will H. Branson, by the bursting of a steam pipe in the pump room in the East Durham Cotton Mills yesterday, carried sorrow and grief to all parts of the State. The sudden ending of the life of any good man makes genuine regret, but when one so widely known and highly esteemed is thus removed from a useful and

busy life, the grief is as poignant as it is widespread.

Less than forty years old, Mr. Will H. Branson had won for himself high position in North Carolina in business, in his church and in the regard of his fellows. He won it by his ability, his industry and his integrity. He was a man of his word. He was true to his promises. He was direct, straightforward, manly. As secretary and treasurer of two of the most prosperous cotton mills in the State, and bank director, his place among the first business men of Durham was established; as trustee of Trinity College, in which institution he took a deep interest, his advice and counsel were sought by his co-trustees and the faculty; as Sunday School superintendent, steward of his church and treasurer of the North Carolina Conference, he was a leader in Methodist circles. In all the relations of life he lived up to his professions, and will be missed by a large circle of business associates and friends. In an ideal home, which was his kingdom, the hearts of all who read the sad news will go out in tender and loving sympathy that from one of hope, of light and joy, it is suddenly converted into one of darkness and gloom, for its light and happiness went out when Will H. Branson passed away yesterday. The devoted wife and children are the objects of universal sympathy, and many prayers will go up for them in many homes in North Carolina that He that doeth all

things well will give them His grace and His strength in the day of their bereavement and anguish.

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The following article, taken from the *News and Observer* of November 28th, 1895, tells in part the story of his successful life, and shows the estimate in which he was held while he lived. There is a mournful pleasure, now that he is dead, in feeling that he knew while in health that he was appreciated. We quote from the issue of November 28th, 1895:

“Mr. Branson was born at Cedar Falls, Randolph county, May the 23rd, 1860. In 1872 he went to Greensboro with the hardware house of Odell, Ragan & Co., afterwards Odell and Company, and remained there until 1885, when he came to Durham to accept the position of secretary and treasurer of the Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company—he was then only 24 years old—a very young man to be called to a position of such responsibility. But he had a wise head, had shown high qualities as a business man, was a consistent, God-fearing, Christian man, and to these high qualities he added industry and old fashioned sense that before-the-war people called horse sense. He had no desire for those pleasures that claim so large a share in the life of so many young men. He knew life was real and earnest, and it was the man who planned wisely and worked faith-



fully who sooner or later got to the top. He was ambitious as a boy but he had none of the notoriety-seeking sort of ambition. It was an ambition that sought the goal by doing well every duty that fell to him.

“Who is the most popular man in Durham?” was asked a company of young Durhamites not a great while ago. ‘Will Branson.’ two or three answered, and all in the company agreed that he was.

“In 1892 the Dukes and others planned to build a large cotton factory. They had not the time to give the business their personal attention, and they looked about to find a man of business judgment, experienced in the cotton mill business and having the peculiar talent necessary to make it pay. They did not have far to look, and selected Mr. Branson, who as secretary and treasurer of the Pearl Cotton Mills, has again demonstrated his practical ability.

“Where else, not alone in North Carolina, but in the United States, will you find a man just 35 years old secretary and treasurer of two such great manufacturies, ‘enjoying the confidence of every capitalist and every poor man in the town in which he resides? You will find a few others, but in almost every case they are older before they are called to such responsibilities, or they are the sons of wealthy men and have had peculiar advantages at the start. Mr. Branson owes his present position chiefly to his own capacity and industry, the

friendship and assistance of wealthy friends being based upon respect and regard for him as a man, and confidence in his ability and integrity.

In addition to his dual duties as secretary and treasurer of two great cotton factories, Mr. Branson is a director in the Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company, the Pearl Cotton Mills Co., the Odell Manufacturing Company, in Concord; the Kerr Bag Manufacturing Company, of Concord; the Greensboro Female College Association; the State University Railroad; Trustee of Trinity College, and director of the Fidelity Bank, of Durham. These positions show the estimate the business world puts upon Mr. Branson's capacity and influence, and still stronger than words of his usefulness to Durham and the State.

“But, busy man as he is, Mr. Branson is never too busy to find time to take interest in church work. In addition to his work in his home church, Mr. Branson, as stated above, is a trustee of the two great colleges of the Methodist Church, Trinity and Greensboro, and has been treasurer of the joint board of finance of the North Carolina Conference since 1889, and was a delegate to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, that met in Memphis in 1894. Mr. Branson was married in Greensboro, December 7, 1885, to Miss Clara Sergeant. And, with all the business successes and honors that have come to him, no man is more devoted to his family. An

all around successful, high-toned, useful citizen is W. H. Branson. The best wish for W. H. Branson, Jr., is that he may grow like his father."

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[*From report of Commencement of Trinity College, in Raleigh News and Observer.*]

Just as the speaking ended, Dr. Kilgo, who had been two unwell to come out, entered and received applause as he took his seat between Mr. W. Duke and Bishop Duncan. He spoke of how painful it had been to him to be compelled to absent himself from the speaking.

Memorial services were held in honor of the late W. H. Branson. Dr. Kilgo made the address. He said Mr. Branson was one of the few monumental men who are created. His absence is mourned on every hand. He was a clean man. No deed needed to be covered. His biography needs no apology. He always thought himself right. No unclean word or broad joke escaped him. That virtue was commended to young men.

He had that high type of honesty that makes a man the lover of the truth. He was a fine example of a husband—he was united to his wife in that mystical union out of the plan of divine fellowship. He taught how to love and make a woman happy. He was a good father, and left the impress upon the son who bears his name and countenance. He

was a man of integrity. He belonged to no party. He loved his friends intently. I felt honored by his affection. He illustrated the truth that in the South young manhood has the best field for success. When he began work as a boy he had 15 cents; he left a comfortable fortune. His means showed what others could do. He never complained at conditions and never charged Providence with being unkind.

He was built for a hero. He was the veritable image of the statue of an old Greek god. His life cannot end. He has gone to show the angels how a man can live among the eternities and grace the courts of God.

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[*Raleigh Morning Post.*]

W. H. Branson, secretary and treasurer of the East Durham Cotton Mill, is dead, and J. C. Mathes, general superintendent of the mill, is so seriously injured that his recovery is doubtful; in consequence of the bursting of a steam pipe in the pump-house of the mill. The accident occurred at 10 o'clock this morning, and Mr. Branson lingered between life and death until 5:15 this afternoon, when he died. He was scalded in the most shocking manner, and in the interval between the accident and his death he suffered untold agony.

The two men were in the pump-house, a small brick structure detached from the main building,

when a large steam pipe used to carry steam from the boilers to the pump, burst. This pipe was five inches in diameter, and the steam almost cooked the men from head to foot before they could get out of the room. The little room was really converted into a steam box, and so great was the pressure that one wall of the house gave way and a hole about five by six feet was torn through it. This explosion relieved the pressure of steam and saved the men from seething to death in the hot steam.

As soon as the pipe burst, Mr. Branson rushed to the door and tried to open it, but could not on account of the pressure. He then ran to a window and knocked it out with his fist, and in doing so cut his hand and arm in a very painful manner. Mr. Mathes then ran to the door, and the release of steam through the hole and window made it possible for him to open the door and he ran out. Mr. Branson had his head and shoulders in the hole he had made in the window, calling for help.

The terrible pressure in the room is shown in the wrecked building. When the pipe burst, the wall in direct line of the force was the first to give way. The steam then rebounded across the room, and the wall on the opposite side from where it first struck was cracked almost from top to bottom. The building is of brick, and the walls are 15 or 18 inches thick.

As soon as help could reach the men, Mr.

Branson was taken to the office of the company and Mr. Mathes was carried to his home next door to the mill, to await the arrival of physicians. Four were summoned, and were on the scene as quickly as possible. Young lady nurses from Watts Hospital were in attendance upon the scalded men almost as soon as the physicians.

Late this evening Mr. Mathes was still living, and hopes of his recovery were entertained. He is burned terribly and is suffering the greatest agony. While it is possible that he may recover, it is feared that he will lose his sight. The skin has slipped from his body in many places.

William H. Branson had lived in Durham thirteen years, being actively identified with the manufacturing and business interests of the city. His connection with the East Durham Mill dated from his arrival here. Later he became secretary and treasurer of the Pearl Mill. He was thirty-eight years old.

In early life Mr. Branson resided in Greensboro with Mr. J. A. Odell, a near relative, under whom he received a most excellent business training, fitting him for the responsible position which he occupied.

Mr. Branson was an active worker and leader in the Methodist church since early life. He was treasurer of the North Carolina Conference and a trustee of Trinity College.

Some years ago Mr. Branson was happily

married to Clara, daughter of Mr. B. E. Sergeant, a leading manufacturer of Greensboro. Several children have blessed this marriage.

Arrangements for the funeral of Mr. Branson have not been made, but will be announced after the arrival of relatives from Greensboro and Concord.

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[ *Concord Standard.* ]

A horrible accident occurred at a cotton mill at Durham, Friday before noon, when a pipe coming from a newly erected pump burst, filling the room in which Mr. W. H. Branson and superintendent Mathes were in with steam. So full of steam was the room that the door could not be opened. Mr. Branson, during his suffering in the room, broke out a window glass and called for help. At last the wall on one side of the building broke and let out the steam, but it was too late to save the life of Mr. Branson, whose body was badly scalded. He died that afternoon a few minutes after five o'clock. The condition of the superintendent was reported very serious on Friday night.

The sad news in regard to Mr. Branson came here that day, several dispatches having been received by Mr. J. M. Odell at different times. Besides being a shock to his friends and acquaintances, the death rests heavily on the families of

Messrs. J. M. and W. R. Odell. Mrs. Branson is a sister to Mrs. W. R. Odell, and the love and care of almost a father has been bestowed upon the deceased by Mr. J. M. Odell.

Mr. Branson was one of the most enterprising mill men of our State and he held a position which will be a hard one for his successor to fill.

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[ *Concord Times.* ]

On last Friday morning, Mr. W. H. Branson, secretary and treasurer of the East Durham Cotton Mill, met his death in a most horrible manner by the bursting of a steam pipe in the mill. Superintendent J. C. Mathes, who was with him was also badly scalded. The following particulars are taken from a special dated Friday to the *Raleigh Post*:

“The accident occurred at 10 o'clock this morning, and Mr. Branson lingered between life and death until 5:15 this afternoon, when he died. He was scalded in the most shocking manner, and in the interval between the accident and his death he suffered untold agony.

“The two men were in the pump house, a small brick structure detached from the main building, when a large steam pipe used to carry steam from the boilers to the pump, burst. This pipe was five inches in diameter, and the steam almost cooked



the men from head to foot before they could get out of the room. The little room was really converted into a steam box, and so great was the pressure that one wall of the house gave way and a hole about five by six feet was torn through it. This explosion relieved the pressure of steam and saved the men from seething to death in the hot steam.

“As soon as the pipe burst, Mr. Branson rushed to the door and tried to open it, but could not on account of the pressure. He then ran to a window and knocked it out with his fist, and in doing so cut his hand and arm in a very painful manner. Mr. Mathes then ran to the door, and the release of steam through the hole and window made it possible for him to open the door and he ran out. Mr. Branson had his head and shoulders in the hole he had made in the window, calling for help.

“The terrible pressure in the room is shown in the wrecked building. When the pipe burst, the wall in direct line of the force was the first to give way. The steam then rebounded across the room, and the wall on the opposite side from where it first struck was cracked almost from top to bottom. The building is of brick, and the walls are 15 or 18 inches thick.”

Mr. Branson was well known in Concord and all over the State. He was a brother-in-law of Mr. W. R. Odell, their wives being sisters. He was 38 years old, and had lived in Durham thirteen years.

He was also secretary and treasurer of the Pearl Mills at Durham, and held other positions of honor and trust. He was treasurer of the North Carolina Conference and a trustee of Trinity College. He was also superintendent of the Sunday School at Carr's Methodist church in East Durham. He was a genial and popular man, and few men gave promise of greater usefulness. He was in Concord just a week before the sad ending of his life, and was then the picture of health and vigorous manhood.

Mr. Branson leaves a wife and two children who have the tenderest sympathy of a large number of friends all over the State. The funeral services were conducted at Trinity Church, Durham, on Saturday, by Dr. Kilgo and others. The remains were taken to Greensboro by special train for interment. Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Odell and Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Odell, of Concord, attended the funeral. Mr. Branson carried life insurance to the amount of \$30,000.

Mr. J. C. Mathes, who was also scalded in the fearful explosion, is getting on well and will recover. The physicians think that his eyes will be saved.

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[ *The Charlotte Observer.* ]

A terrible accident happened at East Durham this morning, a few minutes past 10 o'clock, and as a result Mr. W. H. Branson, secretary and

treasurer of the East Durham Cotton Mill and the Pearl Cotton Mill, is dead, and Mr. J. C. Mathes, general superintendent of the East Durham Mill, may lose his life. Mr. Branson lingered until the late afternoon. They were in the pump room, a small brick structure, when a five-inch steam pipe burst and they were scalded in a fearful manner. In fact, both of the men were burned all over the body. The skin was peeled off in many places and the attending physicians said at the outset that they were in a serious condition.

Messrs. Branson and Mathes had gone into the pump room to look after the pump, which was a new one. When the steam was turned on the large pipe burst, filling the room with steam and scalding the men as above described. The experience these men passed through is one of horror. When the pipe burst the small room was really converted into a steam chest, and so great was the pressure that the door to the room could not be opened. Mr. Branson first tried to get out in that way but finding that he could not open the door he ran to a window and knocked it out with his fist. In the meantime the pressure of the steam was so great that one of the walls gave way and a hole was torn through it about five by six feet in size. This allowed the steam to escape and Mr. Mathes opened the door and ran out. Mr. Branson had his head and shoulder through the opening he had made in the window and was calling for help. The

walls of the building were of brick and about 15 or 18 inches thick. The wall opposite to where the explosion occurred was cracked almost from bottom to top.

Mr. Branson was carried to the office of the company and Mr. Mathes removed to his home not far away. Physicians were soon on the scene and together with nurses from the Watts' Hospital and loving relatives and friends everything possible was done to relieve the suffering of both men.

Physicians this afternoon, before Mr. Branson's death, said that both men were burned all over the body and that their condition was serious. It was then thought that Mr. Mathes and probably Mr. Branson would lose their eyesight at all events.

If the wall to the building had not given away it is thought that both men would have been cooked alive before they could have been rescued from the trap in which they were caught.

LATER.—Mr. Branson died at 5:15 this afternoon, after considerable suffering. He was 38 years old, had resided in Durham thirteen years and leaves a wife and two children. No arrangements have been made for the funeral yet.

Mr. Branson was related to the Odells, of Concord and Greensboro, and the family is awaiting their arrival.

At 8:40 o'clock tonight Mr. Mathes is some better and there are hopes of his recovery, though he is not out of danger yet.

Mr. E. M. Andrews, who is a brother-in-law of Mr. Branson, received the following telegram late yesterday afternoon:

“Mr. Branson was scalded this morning and died this afternoon at 5:15 o’clock.

“DURHAM COTTON MFG. CO.”

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[*The Charlotte Observer.*]

The remains of the late and lamented Mr. W. H. Branson were taken to Greensboro this afternoon on a special train for interment. The funeral train left Durham at 3 o’clock and there were about 50 in the funeral party, including the pall and floral bearers, ministers, relatives and friends. The train returned to Durham tonight.

The funeral service was conducted from Trinity Methodist church this afternoon at 1 o’clock. The service was conducted by his pastor, Rev. D. N. Caviness, of East Durham; Dr. Jno. C. Kilgo, president of Trinity College; Dr. E. A. Yates, Presiding Elder of this district, and others. Dr. Kilgo made the funeral remarks and paid a glowing tribute to the life and work of Mr. Branson. Rev. Mr. Caviness read the first lesson and Dr. Yates the second. Several beautiful songs were rendered by Messrs. J. H. Southgate and Prof. Hamaker; Mesdames Mattie Jones and C. W. Toms, and Miss Bessie Whitaker.

The pall bearers were Messrs. J. H. Southgate, F. M. Sharpe, R. G. Jones, Y. E. Smith, F. L. Fuller, and J. F. Wily, of Durham, Mr. C. H. Ireland, of Greensboro, and Mr. J. G. Brown, of Raleigh. The floral bearers were Messrs. Otis Smoot, J. W. Goodson, M. W. Reed, R. L. Wharton, H. B. Craven, Ed. Pugh, Macon Alston, Dr. W. P. Few and Prof. R. L. Flowers.

Durham is in mourning today. Mr. Branson was loved by all, from the laborer to the millionaire, and his tragic death has touched every heart. The grief-stricken wife and little ones have the sympathy of all our people.

Mr. Branson carried considerable insurance on his life. Among the policies was one in the Penn Mutual for \$10,000; a policy in the Provident Savings and Equitable for \$13,000; and an accident policy in the Fidelity and Casualty for \$5,000.

Mr. J. C. Mathes, who passed through the ordeal of steam with Mr. Branson is still living, and there are hopes for his recovery. He rested quietly all of today and his physicians have hopes of saving his life. He was burned in a fearful manner and has suffered agonies since the terrible accident. His eyes are still closed, and as yet it is impossible to say whether he will lose his eyesight or not. His friends and relatives all hope for the best, and they have some hope that his eyesight may be saved, and that he will be restored to health again.

[*The Charlotte Observer.*]

That was a shocking occurrence yesterday at Durham, by which Mr. W. H. Branson, secretary and treasurer of the Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company and of the Pearl Cotton Mills, lost his life. Mr. Branson was one of the best and most useful men in the State and his tragic death is an event to be deplored, on his family's account, first, but not on its account alone, but likewise for the sake of the interests with which he was connected, and of the State, of which he was so good a citizen.

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[*The Greensboro Evening Telegram.*]

A telegram to Mr. J. A. Odell about noon today brought the sad news to his many friends in this city that Mr. W. H. Branson had been badly burned. In what manner the accident occurred is not stated. The news that his condition is critical brings sorrow enough without reciting the harrowing details. He is secretary and treasurer of the Durham Cotton Mills, and Mr. Matnes, the superintendent, was also burned. The following is the first message received :

“Mr. Branson and Mr. Mathes have been badly burned. We have a doctor and trained nurse dressing their wounds.

“DURHAM COTTON MILLS CO.”

A second message in answer to enquiry by Mr. Odell was as follows :

“Mr. Branson burnt nearly all over the surface of his body. His condition is critical.

“MRS. BRANSON.”

The *Telegram* earnestly hopes Mr. Branson's injuries are not as serious as is now feared. Many earnest prayers will go up for both the unfortunate victims of the cruel blaze.

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[*The Greensboro Evening Telegram.*]

Verily, in the midst of life we are in death. Only two or three days ago we met Mr. W. H. Branson on the streets of Greensboro, in good health, handsome in the bloom and prime of manhood, vigorous and full of life; we can still hear his voice as he cordially greeted us. Today that fine form lies cold in death, that voice is hushed, and that heart, ever big, loyal and true, is still. Our news columns yesterday told of his fatal burning, yet we dared to express the hope that he would get well.

We had enjoyed a personal acquaintance with him for only a few months; but we knew him to love him. He was our friend. A man with convictions and the manhood to stand by and express them. Frank, positive, honest to a fault. Bold and aggressive to a degree that could but be



admired by those who did not think with him, he was a true friend to his church and loyal to all her institutions. This fact will tower with his other virtues and ever be a bright and shining monument to his memory.

Good, noble friend, farewell! May the God of men and nations comfort, console and support, in this sad hour of darkest and deepest earthly affliction, the bereft widow and dear little children.

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[*Greensboro Daily Record.*]

Mr. J. A. Odell received a telegram from the Durham Cotton Mill Company a little after 12 today saying that Mr. Branson and Mr. Mathes, who are the secretary and treasurer and superintendent of the mill, had been badly burned and that a physician and a trained nurse were in attendance.

The wire came too late for Mr. Odell to catch the noon train and he at once wired Mrs. Branson, her answer being that the whole surface of Mr. Branson's body was badly burned and he was in a critical condition.

Mr. Odell can only conjecture how the accident occurred, but thinks it was caused by escaping steam while moving a small engine. He will go down tonight.

Mr. Branson lived here a number of years, marrying a daughter of Mr. B. E. Sergeant, and, though

living in Durham in recent years, he is almost considered a resident of Greensboro. his relationships and business calling him here often.

Great anxiety is felt here over the result, for any kind of a burn is painful and when the entire body is involved his sufferings must be intense, though he is in the prime of life, strong and vigorous, and his friends hope for more cheering news.

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[*Greensboro Daily Record.*]

Mr. W. H. Branson, who met with a most painful accident, as related yesterday, lingered until 5:15 yesterday afternoon, when death relieved his suffering.

Mr. Mathes, superintendent of the mill, also injured badly, is still living, but with little hope of recovery.

The news was received yesterday afternoon too late to get any particulars of how the accident occurred, but the story is told today by the *Raleigh Post*, from which this extract is made:

"The two men, Mr. Branson and Mr. Mathes, were in the pump house, a small structure detached from the main building, when a large steam pipe used to carry steam from the boilers to the pump, burst. This pipe was five inches in diameter, and the steam almost cooked the men from head to foot before they could get out of the

room. The little room was really converted into a steam box, and so great was the pressure that one wall of the house gave way and a hole about five by six feet was torn through it. This explosion relieved the pressure of steam and saved the men from seething to death in the hot steam.

“As soon as the pipe burst Mr. Branson rushed to the door and tried to open it, but could not on account of the pressure. He then ran to a window and knocked it out with his fist, and in doing so cut his hand and arm in a very painful manner. Mr. Mathes then ran to the door and the release of steam through the hole and the window made it possible for him to open the door and he ran out. Mr. Branson had his head and shoulders in the hole he had made in the window, calling for help.

“The terrible pressure in the room is shown in the wrecked building. When the pipe burst the wall in direct line of the force was the first to give way. The steam then rebounded across the room and the wall on the opposite side from where it first struck was cracked almost from top to bottom. The building is of brick, and the walls are 15 or 18 inches thick.

“As soon as help could reach the men, Mr. Branson was taken to the office of the company, and Mr. Mathes was carried to his home next door to the mill, to await the arrival of his physicians. Four men were summoned and were on the scene as quickly as possible. Young lady nurses from

Watt's hospital were in attendance upon the scalded men almost as soon as the physicians.

"Late this evening Mr. Mathes was still living, and hopes of his recovery were entertained. He is burned terribly and is suffering the greatest agony. While it is possible that he may recover, it is feared that he will lose his sight. The skin has slipped from his body in many places."

News of the accident was received here with expressions of deep regret, for, as remarked in yesterday's *Record* Mr. Branson is a Greensboroite, though living in Durham for the past fifteen years, and number as his warm friends all who know him. He was born at Cedar Falls, in Randolph county, March 23rd, 1860, and came to Greensboro in 1872, soon taking a position with the wholesale and retail dry goods firm of Odell, Ragan & Co., where he remained until 1885, the firm in the meantime going out of business and the Odell Hardware Company taking its place, &c. He was a half-brother to Mrs. J. A. Odell, of this place, making his home with the family until he accepted the position of secretary and treasurer of the Durham Cotton Mill, at Durham. He was happily married to Miss Clara Sergeant before his departure from Greensboro and leaves a devoted wife and two children, whose grief is past describing.

Mr. Branson was an active worker and leader in the Methodist church, which he joined in early life.

He was also treasurer of the North Carolina Conference and a trustee of Trinity College.

Mr. Odell and Mr. B. E. Sergeant caught a freight yesterday afternoon after receiving news of his death and reached Durham last night about 10 o'clock. This morning Messrs. Geo. S. and W. T. Sergeant, brothers-in-law, and Mr. C. H. Ireland went down. A number of other relatives and friends were at the station intending to go, but learning the interment would be in Greensboro did not do so. Mr. W. R. Odell, who married a sister to Mr. Branson, accompanied by Mrs. Odell, came through from Concord on the 11:15 train last night.

Funeral services were conducted in Durham this p. m., and the body arrived here on a special train this afternoon at five, and was taken at once to Green Hill.

Quite a number of friends accompanied the remains from Durham.

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[*Greensboro Daily Record.*]

Through a drizzling rain the body of William H. Branson was brought to Greensboro, as related, and buried Saturday afternoon. Over fifty friends from Durham accompanied the remains, returning on the special after the ceremonies were over.

Flowers covered everything, these beautiful but

silent tokens of love, telling far better than words the esteem and love of his legion of friends.

Mr. Branson was a prudent and safe man, not only in the business in which he was engaged, but he looked ahead and prepared, not only for his own salvation in the world to come, but for the earthly comfort of his wife and children, should he be called away.

It will never perhaps be known beyond a doubt what caused the steam pipe to break, catching the men in a veritable trap of death, but Mr. Geo. S. Sergeant, brother to Mrs. Branson, and engaged for a number of years in the machine business, says he thinks it was caused by a defective "T" at a joint. The smallest defect would have caused the break, and as a "T" is acknowledged to be the weakest of all joints, Mr. Sergeant thinks this is the cause.

The house, or room, in which it occurred, had just been built for the use of a large pump and the first thought was that the sudden turning on of the steam had blown out the cylinder head of the pump, but this was not the case, for it is still intact.

Mrs. Branson, while she has not yet of course made up her mind, will probably make Greensboro her home, for here live her father, mother and brothers, and it is the home of her childhood. Of course she has warm friends in Durham, but it is natural she should prefer Greensboro.

[*Textile Excelsior.*]

A fearful accident occurred on Friday morning, March 24th, at 10 o'clock, at the factory of the Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company, which is situated in East Durham, N. C., one gentleman receiving severe scalds which resulted in death a few hours later. W. H. Branson, secretary and treasurer of the company, and J. C. Mathes, general superintendent, were in the pump house that supplies water for the engines that run the mills. A five-inch pipe, in which steam had just been turned, bursted with terrific force, throwing scalding water and steam all over the room, making the place a veritable cauldron and seething hell. Before either of the two gentlemen could get out they were horribly burned all over the body. Mr. Branson lingered until 5:15 o'clock that afternoon, when his soul returned to the God who gave it. Mr. Mathes, while painfully and almost fatally burned, is improving. It is thought that he will recover, but if so will be disfigured for life.

A brief sketch of Mr. Branson, whose horrible death fell as a pall over the people of Durham and other towns, may not be amiss just at this time.

William Henry Branson was born at Cedar Falls, Randolph county, North Carolina, May 23, 1860. In 1872, at the age of 12 years, he went to Greensboro, taking a position with the hardware house of Odell, Ragan & Company, which firm afterwards

changed to Odell & Company. He remained there until 1885, when he came to Durham to accept the position of secretary and treasurer of the Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company. At that time he was 24 years old, a very young man to be called to a position of such responsibility. But his was a wise head; as a business man he possessed the highest qualities; he was a consistent, God-fearing Christian man; added to all these qualities was industry and what is termed "horse sense." Life was real, life was earnest with him. He planned wisely and worked faithfully. His ambition sought the goal of doing well every duty that fell to him.

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[*Raleigh Christian Advocate.*]

On last Friday morning, March 24, the news went over the city of Durham and throughout the State, that William H. Branson had been seriously scalded by steam from a pipe which had burst. The details of the accident were harrowing in the extreme. Mr. J. C. Mathes, superintendent of Durham Cotton Mills, of which Brother Branson was secretary and treasurer, suffered also from the explosion. Shut up as these two men were, in a little brick room filled with escaping steam strong enough to prevent the opening of the door, and finally to blow a large hole in the wall, it is strange that they lived an hour afterward. Mr.



Mathes still lives, but Mr. Branson, after suffering hours of agony, died about 5 o'clock Friday afternoon.

His death is one of the saddest mysteries among the permissive acts of Providence. So brave, so tender, true and kind to others, his dying couch was one of pain. In the full flush of young manhood, he met the dread messenger. But we knew his heart and life, and we know all is well. William H. Branson so lived that he was ready at all times and under all circumstances to answer "Here!" to the call of the Master. We know where he is. We shall know where to find him when we have joined the "great majority."

We do not wish to anticipate his biographer, but we give a short history of his life:

He was born at Cedar Falls, Randolph county, May 23, 1860. He was with a hardware company in Greensboro from 1872 until 1885, when he was married to Miss Clara Sergeant, of Greensboro, and went to Durham to be secretary and treasurer of the Durham Manufacturing Company, in which capacity he acted up to the day of his death.

In addition to his duties as secretary and treasurer of two great cotton manufactories, Mr. Branson was director in the Durham Manufacturing Company, the Pearl Cotton Mills Company, the Odell Manufacturing Company, in Concord; the Kerr Bag Manufacturing Company, Concord; the Greensboro Female College; the State University

railroad; trustee of Trinity College, and director of the Fidelity Bank, Durham.

Brother Branson was a business man of unusual ability. This ability he placed at the disposal of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, of which he was a devoted member. He served as treasurer of the Joint Board of Finance of the North Carolina Conference since 1889. In this capacity he did arduous work. His brethren delighted to honor him to the electing him to the District, Annual and General Conferences. In Durham, as elsewhere, Brother Branson was universally popular. People loved him because he was loving. His death has saddened the whole community. We have few like him. Yet we thank our Heavenly Father for the work which he has already wrought and the memory which will remain fresh and green during the passing years.

He was laid to rest on Saturday afternoon in the beautiful Green Hill Cemetery at Greensboro. For the stricken wife and children we implore the comfort and protection of the Spirit. They have the sympathy and prayers of all true hearts.

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[*D. N. Cariness, in Raleigh Christian Advocate.*]

William H. Branson was born at Cedar Falls, Randolph county, North Carolina, May 23, 1860, and died at his home in Durham, N. C., March 24,

1899. When he was twelve years old he went to Greensboro, N. C., to live with his brother-in-law, Mr. J. A. Odell, with whom he lived until 1885. During these years he had all the advantages of a refined, Christian home, which was indeed exceedingly congenial to his young but great heart. While here he received, in a practical way, a thorough business training, for which work he was peculiarly adapted. So thoroughly did he prove himself to be a business man of fine parts that the Messrs. Odell saw and appreciated his work, and in 1885 they put him at the head of their manufacturing interests in Durham. The same traits of character that characterized him as a man of sterling worth and unusual business tact continued to develop in him as the head of the Durham Manufacturing Company. When he took charge of the mill it was comparatively small, but when he laid his work down fourteen years later the mill was capitalized at \$225,000. At the time of his death he was secretary and treasurer of the Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company, and also of the Pearl Cotton Mill. He was a director in these and in other cotton mills in North Carolina. He was also a director in the Fidelity Bank of Durham, a director of the Southern and Seaboard railroads. He was trustee of Trinity College and of Greensboro Female College.

As a business man he, perhaps, had no superior, and but few peers. Though he was a man of such

wonderful business powers he delighted in giving some of his best service to his church. For nine years he served the North Carolina Conference as treasurer of the Joint Board of Finance. Speaking from personal knowledge of him, it was a pleasure to him to do all that he did for the church. He looked forward to the meeting of our annual Conference with as much interest and hopeful anticipation as any clerical member of the Conference possibly could. No man knew the members of the Conference better than did Brother Branson. No man ever gave the preachers a more cordial hand-grasp or had a warmer place in his heart than did he. He not only knew and loved the members of the Conference, but when he addressed one of them he delighted in using that familiar word to which all Methodists have a birthright, "brother." His devotion to his church was beautiful. Though in the business world he was a giant, yet, he was one of the most thoroughly consecrated Christian men I have ever known. He did not get where he was ashamed to recognize a Methodist preacher as "brother."

One who played with him in childhood and who has been intimately associated with him in all their business life said, "I never heard Will use a hard word or tell a smutty joke in my life. He would not say a thing that he could not repeat in the presence of ladies." All honor to such a man. May the Lord give us many more like him.

It was in 1876 or 1877 that Brother Branson was converted and joined West Market Church, in Greensboro, during the pastorate of Rev. S. D. Adams. Soon after he joined the church he was elected a steward and served in that capacity until his death. A more efficient, faithful steward has never served a church. He has been superintendent of our Sunday School ever since its organization. He kept the school in a fine condition all the time. I have never seen but one weeping, sorrowing Sunday School, that was Carr Church Sunday School, on Sunday morning, March 25, when we assembled for the first time after our beloved superintendent's death. His chair was vacant, his familiar form did not appear, but love for him was in every heart, as the tears in all eyes attested. He also served the church as delegate to District, Annual, and General Conferences.

One who was intimate with him said: "I have been with him in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, and in many other places, but have never seen him in any company, hotel or place, where he did not, if appropriate, speak of his church in the best of terms."

His life was an exponent of love and fidelity to his church. A member of our Conference said: "He was the most useful layman in the Conference."

On December 17, 1885, Brother Branson was married to Clara Sergeant, of Greensboro, who, with Annie and William H., Jr., survive him.

Helen, a bright jewel, preceded her father to the Spirit World. Will not the prayers of our Conference ascend for Sister Branson and the two children? May William H. Branson, Jr., worthily wear the name of his sainted and noble father.

“Unless God be with us all our toil is in vain,” is a quotation taken from a little memorandum book found in Brother Branson’s pocket after his death. The quotation was in his handwriting. This sentence gives us in a few words the key to his success and usefulness.

“O happy, happy soul  
In ecstasies of praise,  
Long as eternal ages roll,  
Thou see’st thy Savior’s face.

“Soldier of Christ, well done,  
Praise be thy new employ:  
And while eternal ages run,  
Rest in thy Savior’s joy.”

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[*Q. K. Nimocks, in Raleigh Christian Advocate.*]

The tragic death of poor Branson came as a terrible shock to his friends in Fayetteville, as it did everywhere he was known. He was in the truest and highest sense one of “Nature’s noble-men,” and his loss will be keenly felt among us, especially at the sessions of the Annual Conference, where in time past he met so many of the

friends who now mourn his untimely end. The church militant has lost a valiant soldier, and Methodism in particular an earnest and zealous member in the death of this good man. May the shining example he has left us of unselfish devotion to Christian duty prove an inspiration to his fellow-servants of the Master in the Methodist laity who remain. May peace evermore be his.

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[*Nashville (Tenn.) Christian Advocate.*]

It gives us deeper sorrow than words can express to announce the untimely death of Mr. William H. Branson, secretary and treasurer of the Durham, N. C., Cotton Mill. The sad event took place on the 24th inst., and was due to the accidental bursting of a steam pipe. Brother Branson was one of the foremost young business men of North Carolina, and seemed to have a great future before him. He was also an excellent Christian and a staunch Methodist. Many who met him at the last General Conference will learn with deep regret that he has been taken away so soon.

## RESOLUTIONS OF RESPECT.

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### DURHAM COTTON MANUFACTURING COMPANY.

EAST DURHAM, N. C., April 6, '99.

WHEREAS, William H. Branson, who for the past fourteen years has been the efficient secretary and treasurer of the Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company, has died since the last meeting of the Directors of said Company, and it is not only proper, but in accordance with their personal wishes, to spread on the records and let it be known in what high esteem he was held by his associates, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That in every relation of life our departed friend and associate was an ideal man. As a husband he was thoughtful and attentive; as a father he was tender and loving; as a neighbor he was kind and obliging; as a man of business he had no superior in our midst; as a Christian he exemplified the teachings of the Master. He was a fearless, brave, heroic lover of truth. While he loved popular approval he did not fawn upon it. When he made up his mind that a thing was right no other question seemed to concern him but its performance. He loved his business and he was a friend of his operatives. What a crown of glory awaits one of whom it can be truthfully said that under his administration for fourteen years no breath of scandal came near the mill people, "our people," as he loved to call them, whose welfare was his chief solicitude. The Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company



has been greatly blessed in having him for its secretary and treasurer, and will ever miss his efficient services.

*Resolved, further,* That we tender to his wife and family our deepest sympathy; that a copy of these resolutions be spread upon the minutes of the Company, a copy be sent to his wife, and also, that they be published in the *Durham Sun*, *Durham Morning Herald*, *Raleigh Post* and *Raleigh Christian Advocate*.

GEO. W. WATTS,  
H. W. JACKSON,  
B. N. DUKE,  
*Committee.*

## PEARL COTTON MILLS.

DURHAM, N. C., April 6, 1899.

At a meeting of the Directors of the Pearl Cotton Mills, held this day, the following action was taken:

WHEREAS, William H. Branson, who has been secretary and treasurer of the Pearl Cotton Mills since its organization, has been called from his work on earth since our last meeting, we, his co-laborers, desire to certify our estimation of his character, and do

*Resolve,* That William H. Branson was one of the best equipped cotton mill men we ever knew, being thoroughly familiar with machinery and methods necessary to produce given results. He was also a model organizer and director of labor, being kind, yet firm; generous, yet mindful of the interests of those he served, and knowing how everything in the mills should be done. He was also a merchant, finding ready sale for our production in the face of strong competition, his honesty and integrity causing his customers to implicitly rely upon any statement he made and any goods he sold them.

We miss him, not only as a valued assistant in our work, but as a faithful friend, whose warm greeting, cheery voice and genial presence always encouraged us to better endeavors.

We tender to his wife and family our deepest sympathy.

We order these resolutions spread upon the minutes and a copy be furnished his wife; also to the town papers, *Raleigh Post* and the *Raleigh Christian Advocate* with request to publish.

J. M. ODELL,

B. N. DUKE,

W. A. ERWIN,

*Committee.*

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## ODELL MANUFACTURING COMPANY.

CONCORD, N. C., July, 11, '99.

WHEREAS, Wm. H. Branson was a stockholder of this corporation, and one of the most active and efficient members of its Board of Directors from his earliest connection with it, and

WHEREAS, He was a man of the finest social qualities, always genial and agreeable towards his fellows, and

WHEREAS, His moral character and religious life were of the best possible type, and

WHEREAS, He was suddenly cut off in the midst of his days and usefulness by a fearful accident, which occurred at his mill in Durham, N. C., on the 24th of March, 1899, therefore, be it

*Resolved, first,* That in this sad event, showing the ways of the Lord to be past finding out, we mournfully bow to the will of God, and pray that his taking away may be employed to the honor of His name.

*Second.* That we hereby tender our heartfelt sympathy

and prayer to the bereaved family, trusting that they may ever realize the presence and help of that Friend who cannot be taken from them, and who will never leave nor forsake them.

*Third.* That a copy of this paper be sent to Mrs. Branson and a copy be spread upon our minutes, also a page of our record book be set apart as sacred to his memory.

D. B. COLTRANE,  
THOS. W. SMITH,  
JNO. A. BARNHARDT,  
*Committee.*

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## SOUTHERN COTTON MILLS.

BESSEMER CITY, N. C., Sept. 13, 1899.

WHEREAS, Mr. Wm. H. Branson has died since our last meeting, and under circumstances that render his death especially pathetic:

*Resolved.* That this Board record this expression of its bereavement, deeply felt by each of us, his associates; and that our company has suffered a severe loss in his death. He was of full experience and fully endowed naturally to fill efficiently the office that he held.

*Resolved.* That a copy of this resolution be sent to Mrs. W. H. Branson and a copy be recorded with the minutes of the meeting.

For the Board.

S. J. DURHAM,  
*Secretary.*

## FIDELITY BANK.

DURHAM, N. C., April 1, 1899.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Fidelity Bank, held today, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, Since the last meeting of this Board, William H. Branson, one of its most honored members, has died; and

WHEREAS, During his life time his zeal and energy in behalf of this bank were so helpful to it;

*Resolved*, By the Board of Directors of the Fidelity Bank, in meeting assembled, that this Bank by his death has lost a prudent, loyal officer, who was a valuable factor in its affairs; and that the members of this Board personally have been deprived of the advice and assistance of a diligent, active associate and fellow counsellor, upon whose judgment it was always safe to rely.

*Resolved, further*, That we hereby tender to his wife and children in their sad bereavement our heartfelt sympathy and condolence.

*Resolved, further*, That a copy of these resolutions be sent by the secretary of this meeting to his family, and that copies hereof be sent to the *Raleigh Christian Advocate* and our city papers, with the request that they publish them, and further, that they be spread upon the minutes of this meeting of the Board, upon a page of such minutes to be set apart for that purpose.

JOHN F. WILY,  
*Cashier and Secretary.*

## TRUSTEES OF TRINITY COLLEGE.

The 24th day of March, 1899, was a sad day for Durham and Trinity College. On this day William H. Branson, rejoicing in the strength of mature manhood, was called by a most sudden death into the possession of that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled; and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for him.

The Board of Trustees of Trinity College, of which Bro. Branson was a member, hereby declares itself greatly bereaved in his death. He was a most valued trustee, energetic, alert, and alive to every interest of Trinity College, which he loved with an almost passionate devotion. His place in the annual meeting was seldom vacant. Though burdened with great business interests he always found time to obey the call of the College. His voice was a familiar one, bold, decided, and carrying with it the weight of wisdom.

The Board hereby expresses its appreciation of Brother Branson not only as an official member, but as a Christian gentleman. It rejoices in the fact that the wealth of his broad, consecrated manhood will long be enjoyed by the College of his love, the church in which he was an all day laborer, and the generation which he so faithfully served.

The Board would also express its deep sympathy for the widow and children, who mourn the loss of one who was a model husband and father. It commends them to the One whose providences are always loving and wise.

The Board hereby orders that a copy of this memorial paper be sent respectively, to the family of the deceased, the Durham papers, the *Raleigh Christian Advocate*, and the *North Carolina Christian Advocate*.

T. N. IVEY,

*In behalf of the Board of Trustees  
of Trinity College, N. C.*

## FACULTY OF TRINITY COLLEGE.

WHEREAS, William H. Branson, who, for several years, has been a Trustee of Trinity College, and also a member of the Executive Committee of the said Board, and of the Finance Committee of the College, died on March 24th, 1899, the Faculty of Trinity College desire to give expression to their love and esteem for the deceased; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That in the death of Mr. Branson the members of the Faculty feel that the institution has lost one of its most valued friends and supporters, and each member of the Faculty a warm personal friend. In all his relations with the College he has been actuated by an unselfish desire for its success and welfare. There was no enterprise of the College in which he was not interested, and to the solution of all the problems of the College he brought the same elements which made him so successful in his business, and so influential in his church. No member of the Board of Trustees ever performed his duty more faithfully or with more ability, and the Faculty always felt that in him they had an official and friend who was anxious to aid in any enterprise for the success of the institution. By his warm greeting and genial presence he made men love him as few can do. Trinity College will miss him and the members of the Faculty have lost a faithful and honored friend.

We tender to his wife and children our deepest sympathy, and pray that God may strengthen them in this sorrow.

R. L. FLOWERS,

JEROME DOWD,

J. S. BASSETT,

*Committee.*

## STUDENTS OF TRINITY COLLEGE.

WHEREAS, It has pleased God suddenly to remove from our midst William H. Branson, and

WHEREAS, He, as a member of the Board of Trustees of Trinity College, labored constantly and devotedly for the betterment of the institution to which we belong, be it therefore

*Resolved, 1st,* That while we bow in humble submission to the summons which has called him away, we express our great sorrow over the sudden and irreparable loss of one so young and so strong.

*Resolved, 2d,* That the students of Trinity College have lost in him not only a warm personal friend and personal supporter, but also the inspiring presence of one who, by his daily walk, has left us a worthy example of manly, heroic character.

*Resolved, 3d,* That Trinity College and the Church of North Carolina have lost one of their most consecrated and capable workers.

*Resolved, 4th,* That the State of North Carolina has suffered a great loss in the death of one who spent all the powers of a strong character for her educational and material advancement.

*Resolved, 5th,* That we express to the bereaved wife and children our heartfelt sympathy, and, as participants of their sorrow, beg for them that consolation which alone is sufficient.

*Resolved, 6th,* That a copy of these resolutions be sent to the bereaved family, and copies to the *Raleigh Christian Advocate* and the *Trinity Archive* for publication.

## GREENSBORO FEMALE COLLEGE ASSOCIATION.

WHEREAS, W. H. Branson, a director of the Greensboro Female College Association, has departed this life, and

WHEREAS, We desire to make record of the high esteem in which he was held by the Association, to express our great appreciation of his labors for the College, and to chronicle our deep sorrow at this sad dispensation of Providence: therefore, be it

*Resolved*, By the Board of Directors of the Greensboro Female College Association:

*1st.* That by the death of W. H. Branson this College, and the cause of Christian education generally, have suffered an irreparable loss; the church has lost one of its most devoted and useful members, and the State mourns the loss of one of its best citizens. His was a positive character. He performed "with his might" every duty which devolved upon him. His capacity for work was simply wonderful. His labors were incessant, and yet he never seemed to be rushed, or in a hurry. His devotion to the cause of education was intense, and his wisdom never failed in the council chambers of our Church institutions. He was active in all Church work, and delighted to engage in any movement for the elevation of humanity. A stronger, gentler, better, manlier man it has not been our lot to know.

*2d.* That we are in deep sympathy with the bereaved wife and children in their grief, and commend them to the care and comfort of Him who loves them and gave himself for them.

*3d.* That these resolutions be spread upon the minutes of the Association, and that a copy be sent to the family of the deceased.

DRED PEACOCK,

O. W. CARR,

W. R. ODELL,

*Committee.*



## FACULTY OF GREENSBORO FEMALE COLLEGE.

GREENSBORO, N. C., April 4, 1899.

The undersigned committee, on the part of the Faculty of Greensboro Female College, draughted the following resolutions of respect:

WHEREAS, In the providence of God, death has stricken down in the flower of manhood, our friend and brother, Mr. W. H. Branson; therefore, be it

*Resolved, 1st*, That in the death of Mr. Branson Greensboro Female College has lost one of her most faithful trustees and devoted friends.

*Resolved, 2d*, That the State has lost one of her best citizens, and the Church one of her wisest counsellors and most loyal members.

*Resolved, 3d*, That we extend our deepest sympathy to the grief-stricken wife and relations of our departed brother, with the prayer that God's sustaining grace may be with them in this time of greatest need.

*Resolved, 4th*, That a copy of these resolutions be sent to the bereaved wife of the deceased, and that copies of the same be published in the *College Message*, the *Raleigh Christian Advocate* and the *North Carolina Christian Advocate*.

T. A. SMOOT,  
LILLIAN LONG,  
MINNIE H. MOORE.

## SYMPATHETIC TELEGRAMS.

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GREENSBORO, N. C., March 24, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Keep me posted as to Branson's condition: will be down tomorrow morning. All the people here deeply deplore the accident and sympathize with you.

J. A. ODELL.

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NEW YORK, March 24, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Greatly grieved to learn of Mr. Branson's accident. Hope he is doing nicely, and will soon be well.

GEO. W. WATTS.

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NEW YORK, March 24, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Our deepest sympathy is with you in the loss of your noble husband, whom I loved as a brother and esteemed as one of my best friends.

GEO. W. WATTS.

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RALEIGH, N. C., March 25, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

We deeply sympathize with you. Your loss is ours, too.

T. N. IVEY.

RALEIGH, N. C., March 24, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

I have just received a telegram advising me of your sad loss. I deeply sympathize with you. Mr. Branson was one of my very good friends and I shall miss him.

H. W. MILLER.

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GREENSBORO, N. C., March 24, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Mrs. Glenn joins me in tender sympathy for you.

TYRE GLENN.

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RALEIGH, N. C., March 24, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Am greatly saddened by distressing news of your good husband's death. Accept assurances of my sincere sympathy.

R. T. GRAY.

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ST. GEORGE, N. Y., March 24, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Prostrated over dear Will's death. Accept deepest sympathy from all family. I leave for Durham Saturday afternoon.

HENRY G. WOODRUFF.

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RALEIGH, N. C., March 25, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

My wife joins in tenderest sympathy. The whole State mourns with you in loss of one of its best sons.

JOSEPHUS DANIELS.

BALTIMORE, MD., March 25, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Bessie joins me in deepest love and sympathy for you.

SAM. F. PATTERSON.

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NEW YORK, March 25, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

You have my deepest sympathy in your great sorrow.

R. L. PATTERSON.

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ROXBORO, N. C., March 25, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

We deeply sympathize with you in the death of your devoted husband.

J. A. LONG AND WIFE.

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ROXBORO, N. C., March 25, 1899.

*To Mr. C. A. Jordan, Durham, N. C.:*

Please tender Mrs. Branson my heartfelt sympathy.

R. E. LONG.

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NEW YORK, March 25, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

We cannot express how deeply we sympathize with you.

MR. AND MRS. W. W. FULLER.

NASHVILLE, TENN., March 24, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Let one who knows what sorrow is extend his sympathy and pray God's blessings on you in this sad hour.

J. B. MORGAN.

RALEIGH, N. C., March 24, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Have just heard the sad news. Please accept our deepest sympathy for yourself and family.

LEE &amp; LATTA.

NEW YORK, March 25, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Allow me to trespass in this hour of your saddest bereavement by tendering my sincere condolence. Your dearest one, and my friend, is gone. May we all at last meet where there is no sorrow, no separation, and where every tear shall be washed away. God makes no mistakes.

E. J. PARRISH.

PORTSMOUTH, VA., March 25, 1899.

*To Mr. W. A. Muse, Agent Durham and Northern Railway,  
Durham, N. C.:*

I beg you will extend my deepest sympathy to family of Mr. W. H. Branson, whom I personally knew and for whom I entertained a very high regard.

E. ST. JOHN,  
*Vice-President.*

RICHMOND, VA., March 25, 1899.

*To Mr. W. A. Muse, Agent Durham and Northern Railway,  
Durham, N. C.:*

Please extend to the family of Mr. W. H. Branson my sincerest sympathy in the bereavement which has befallen them, and express to them the loss which we keenly feel at the removal of one whose judgment and influence and support we have always so highly prized.

JOHN SKELTON WILLIAMS,  
*President.*

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HENDERSON, N. C., March 25, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

You have our sincerest sympathies and prayers in your sad bereavement. May God's goodness and tender mercy sustain you and the dear little ones in this darkest hour of sorrow.

MR. AND MRS. D. Y. COOPER.

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GREENSBORO, N. C., March 24, 1899.

*To Mrs. W. H. Branson, Durham, N. C.:*

Will you bury Will there or bring to Greensboro? My tenderest sympathy my dear, dear, sister.

CHARLES H. IRELAND.

## LETTERS TO HIS FAMILY.

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RALEIGH, N. C., March 27, 1899.

MY DEAR SISTER BRANSON:

I have no words with which to tell you of the profound grief that has shadowed my soul since the death of your dear, good husband.

I had for him a strong and abiding love, such as I have for but few. I regarded him as one of my very best friends. No man had my unbounded confidence more than he. One of the brightest and most enjoyable features of my Annual Conference experience was in meeting with him and working with him on the Joint Board of Finance—a work which he loved so dearly and did so perfectly.

What words can I write you to tell you of how I will miss him!

But I know this blow comes more heavily on you than on any one else. All that I can do is to commend you to the grace of Him who alone can understand why your husband was taken. God has promised not to leave nor forsake you.

I desired so much to come up on day of funeral, but found I could not. You have my heart's sympathy; and not only so, but I feel that I also am bereaved. May God be very gracious unto you and your precious children, and keep you unto that blessed reunion in the home where death never enters.

Sincerely yours,

W. C. NORMAN.

## SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

JOHN O. WILLSON, EDITOR.

COLUMBIA, S. C., March 27, 1899.

MY DEAR BROTHER:\*

My heart has sorrowed with you from the first tidings of the tragedy. Branson won my confidence and then my affection, and I felt his death as a personal loss; but I knew that he was so knit to you that it would be like Jonathan's fall to David. How strange such a noble man should be taken when true men are so much needed! But God will not allow His cause or His children to suffer without recompense.

Express my sympathy to family.

Affectionately yours,

J. O. WILLSON.

CHARLESTON, S. C., March 27, 1899.

MY DEAR JOHN:\*

Your short note with its sad intelligence came to me this morning. I reply at once to assure you that you do have our sympathy and sorrow in your loss.

I well remember Brother Branson: quiet, unassuming, patient, strong in conviction, a manly man. Such men make us have faith in humanity. I am glad I knew him, though only for a little while, yet long enough for me to see a true man. Such a vision always enriches any life, as it also obligates to a higher manhood. I pray God to sustain his friends in their loss and to comfort his bereaved family.

You will please express to Mrs. Branson my sympathy. I met her last August. The Lord kindly regard you and yours.

Affectionately, your brother,

JAS. W. KILGO.

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\*Written to Dr. Kilgo and sent to Mrs. Branson.



GUILFORD COLLEGE, N. C., April 1, 1899.

DEAR CLARA:

Dear precious girl; how can I say what I feel? My own heart aches; my tears flow; I think of you nearly all the time. I have nothing to say; I just want to take you in my arms and pray God to give us faith, or strength, or whatever we need, to say, "Thy will be done," and to trust Him and believe that out of all this anguish which I know is yours His perfect purpose may be wrought out. I do not pretend to know whether He sends things, or how they come, but I know that He can overrule everything, and bring light out of darkness and "give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,"—Isa. 61:3; and yet I know it is hard to place ourselves so in harmony with the Eternal when our very life is crushed under the burden of the present, and I do not believe our God requires more than we can do or regards our natural feelings as wrong. All we can do is to throw ourselves on His love and mercy. *He is our Father.* My love goes out to you in unbounded measure, and I pray God to hold you in His hands.

Your friend,

MARY MENDENHALL HOBBS.

[Wife of President Hobbs of Guilford College.]

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GREENSBORO, N. C., March, 28, 1899.

MY DEAR MRS. BRANSON:

I cannot tell you how inexpressibly shocked I am at the awfully sudden taking away of your husband and my friend. Only a few days ago I met him on our streets, full of health and vigor, and I cannot yet realize I shall meet him no more.

I know that words of condolence and sympathy are

empty sounds to you now in your sorrow, but I feel that I must at least assure you of my grief over your loss, and mine, and indeed that of the whole State, for your husband commanded the respect, and even the esteem of all who knew him, even casually, and I have known him for twenty years.

May the God of the fatherless and widow comfort your heart, for you do not sorrow as one without hope.

While he cannot return to us we have his life and character to assure us that we may go to him in his home of rejoicing.

Yours very sincerely,

W. P. BEALL.

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ROCKINGHAM, N. C., March 30, 1899.

MY DEAR CLARA:

The sad, sad news of your loss came to me in the papers, and I feel sure that to no friend did they bring more of real sorrow. Aside from my deep and heartfelt sympathy for you, your dear babies, and all of the family, Willie's death is to me a personal loss. For years, now, I have met him very seldom, but he has always been one of "my boys," as he used to be, when a member of my Sunday School class in Greensboro for four years. Each time we met he would recall the old days affectionately, and often, when seeing Mr. LeGrand, would send some pleasant message, or insist that we should visit your home. Only a few weeks ago he told Mr. LeGrand in Raleigh that in his home "there would ever be a cordial welcome" for me and mine.

Following his steps as he moved along, a useful, honored Christian, it has been such a pleasure to watch the bright, lovable Christian boy grow into a man, loved and honored

by all, and filling nobly places of trust in Church and State.

God, in His wisdom, has seen fit to take your loved one home and my heart bows in grief and deepest sympathy with you while I recall with thankfulness his noble life.

We know not why the blow has fallen, but it comes from a loving Father's hand, and that same hand will guide us if we hold it fast, even while we are in the blackest darkness without one ray of light. Trust in God and He will bring out the light so that you will see His love and mercy some day. It may not be all made plain till you have been re-united in Heaven, but it surely will all be clear to us then. My prayers go up with many others for you in your sorrow, and I know that God *will* comfort and sustain you. Kiss the children and give my love to Mr. and Mrs. Odell and your own family, as they share your bereavement.

Mr. LeGrand joins me in every expression of sorrow and sympathy, and even my children, who have heard me speak so often of "My Sunday school boys," wish me to say how they sympathize with you all.

Please excuse the writing as I am still nervous from the severe headache which prevented my writing earlier.

Your affectionate friend,

REBECCA WILSON LEGRAND.

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FAYETTEVILLE, N. C., March 25, 1899.

MRS. W. H. BRANSON, Durham, N. C.:

DEAR MADAM—I have just read in the papers an account of the untimely and shocking death of your good husband, and although I am probably unknown to you, yet it was my privilege to know Mr. Branson intimately and well, and I speak the truth when I say that I have never known a man who impressed me more favorably, and who, to my

mind, combined to a greater degree all the elements of an upright, Christian gentleman. He was, in a very positive sense, a truly righteous man.

Let me assure you of my profound sympathy in this the saddest hour of mortal life—the loss of a good, true, and noble husband. I had looked forward to the time when we should meet and have the pleasure of a week's friendly and social intercourse during the session of our next Annual Conference, where we have so often met before, had he lived, but alas, it is a world of disappointment and sorrow. He has gone to his reward, and a rich one it will be.

Bro. W. L. Cunningham, our beloved pastor, is deeply touched by the sad event, and he, as well as all our Methodist people here, whose good fortune it was to know Mr. Branson, deeply sympathize with you in your sad bereavement. May God comfort you with the consolations of divine grace in the dark and trying hour.

Your husband's friend,

Q. K. NIMOCKS.

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RALEIGH, N. C., March 25, 1899.

MRS. W. H. BRANSON, Greensboro, N. C.:

MY DEAR MADAM—I simply write a line to express my profound sorrow over the sad news of your husband's death. I have scarcely been able to think of anything else all day today, and from the moment the news first reached us yesterday.

It is needless for me to speak of my high regard and admiration for him, for wherever he was known his high character, both as a Christian gentleman and a man of affairs, commanded the respect and confidence of all men.

My wife and mother send to you their sincerest sympa-

thy, in which I beg to join, and we send by this evening's express some flowers which we wish to be laid upon his grave.

Most sincerely,

HERBERT W. JACKSON.

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11 MONTAGUE PLACE, LONDON, April 7, 1899.

MR. AND MRS. J. A. ODELL, Greensboro, N. C.:

MY DEAR FRIENDS—Ella and I have just received a letter from Prof. Carr informing us of the awful accident in Durham, resulting in the death of our beloved friend, W. H. Branson. We are terribly shocked and greatly grieved at this inexpressibly sad intelligence, and write to assure you of our heartfelt sympathy. How we wish it were possible to write something that would in some measure mitigate your grief! While we cannot do this still we are thankful for the privilege of at least adding our sorrow to your own, and thus expressing our sense of bereavement by his untimely death.

What a loss to our dear College, to the Church—yes, to the State! His like is not to be seen often, and his place will be very hard to fill.

We are sure that we feel his death no less because of our great distance away. Thank God our love for dear ones is able completely to annihilate distance!

It is needless for us to point to you two the goodness and mercy of God under such circumstances as these, for you both know too well what this is by reason of your constant communion with Him. We both pray earnestly that His grace may be sufficient for you in this sad hour. How we do feel for his disconsolate wife and orphaned children! How we would like to be able to lessen their burden of affliction! God knows all things and makes no errors, and

in His own good time we will be made to know His inscrutable ways.

Pray, again, be assured of our deepest sorrow and sympathy, and believe us always with much love,

Your very true friends, .

DRED PEACOCK AND WIFE.

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11 MONTAGUE PLACE. LONDON, April 7, 1899.

DEAR MRS. BRANSON:

We have just received news of Mr. Branson's death and hasten to write, assuring you of our deep sorrow at this, to us, very distressing news. While we know it is impossible for us to write anything that will make your grief less, still we want to assure you of our true sympathy. The fact that we are far away in a foreign land does not mitigate the blow for us. Love does not recognize distance, and we feel a great personal loss in his death.

This is a great loss to our College, Church and State. It will be long before his place can be filled.

Pray, be further assured of our great sorrow, and allow us to share your sorrow in the death of one dear to us all.

Sincerely and cordially,

DRED PEACOCK AND WIFE.

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NORFOLK, VA., March 25, 1899.

MY DEAR MRS. BRANSON:

What can I say to you in expression of the deep sorrow which has so suddenly and cruelly befallen us all? No words at my command are adequate to convey to you how appalling and shocking came the telegraphic news of dear Will's death. At 12 o'clock last night came a telegram

from Captain Odell announcing the awful fact, which simply astounded the entire family, and caused our hearts to go out to you and your dear little children in the hour of your irreparable loss. Personally I have lost a dear friend whom I always *loved* as a brother and to whom I ever felt so near.

Mrs. Woodruff and each of my family join me in tendering to you and the dear little ones our *deepest sympathy*, and assure you that we share the great grief by which you have been so suddenly overwhelmed.

I intend leaving for Durham this afternoon to attend the funeral, which I thought would occur on Sunday, as I desired to show my last mark of respect to my dear friend and lay a flower upon his grave in evidence of the love I have for him.

Kindly give to Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Odell my kindest regards and beg them to accept my sincere condolence.

May our Heavenly Father sustain and comfort you and your little family; and be assured that in me you have *always a friend*, ever willing and ready to render to you any service or comfort that may contribute to the happiness of you and yours.

It will be a long time before I can realize that my dear and good friend whom I loved has gone to his Heavenly home.

Mrs. Woodruff will write you.

Very sincerely yours,

H. G. WOODRUFF.

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ODELL MANUFACTURING CO.

CONCORD, N. C., March 30. 1899.

DEAR CLARA:

I enclose some letters received this A. M. I trust they may be of some comfort to you.

I never saw such an unanimity of sentiment as to the character and life of Will as is expressed by all classes of people. We are all thinking of you every moment, and will pray God to comfort you in this hour of your deep sorrow.

Anything I can do for you please do not fail to drop me a line. I trust you are all well. With love.

Yours sincerely,

W. R. ODELL.

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### MORGAN & HAMILTON CO.

NASHVILLE, TENN., March 27, 1899.

DEAR WILL:\*

Your telegram startled me. I don't know when I have been so shocked. What an awful death! That Mr. Branson should have been taken in this way is distressing. I have, ever since I first met him, looked upon him as a noble fellow, and while I didn't meet him often, I have heard so much of him from you and your father and in your homes, that I, too, had grown unconsciously to respect and love him, and so when your telegram came about 9:30 at night I felt that I, too, had lost a good and true friend. My heart goes out to you all, as I wired you Friday night. May God bless you and sanctify to your good this great sorrow. Some of these days the mysteries will be made plain to us. "His arm is not shortened to save!" It was His plan and we must bow in submission to His will. Remember me in great tenderness to Mrs. Odell and to Mrs. Branson when you write to them. I wish I could say something that would lighten the load and comfort them. I know what they are passing through. My own poor

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\*Written to Mr. W. R. Odell and sent to Mrs. Branson.



heart is torn and bleeding. Let us all remember that our strength is from above, and that

“ Not to the strong is the battle,  
Not to the swift is the race,  
But to the true and the faithful  
Victory is given through grace.”

Write me, dear Will, the particulars when you find time, or send me papers.

Yours sincerely,

JO. B. MORGAN.

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### SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY.

RALEIGH, N. C., March 29, 1899.

MR. W. R. ODELL, East Durham, N. C.:\*

MY DEAR MR. ODELL—I was absent in New York when I received a telegram from my office advising me of the horrible accident causing the death of Mr. Branson. I can scarcely realize that we will not be able to see him and get his wise opinion on questions that affect, not only the State, but the different individual interests in it.

Mr. Branson was one of my very good friends. He was a man of sterling worth and integrity and the State is the sufferer by his death. I deeply sympathize with his family in their sad bereavement.

The sad results of this accident bring home to us very vividly that “in the midst of life we are in death.”

With very high personal regards, I am,

Yours very truly,

A. B. ANDREWS.

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\*Written to Mr. W. R. Odell and sent to Mrs. Branson.

## THE ORTON.

WILMINGTON, N. C., March 26, 1899.

MR. W. R. ODELL, Concord, N. C.:\*

DEAR SIR—I read yesterday in a Charleston paper an account of the sad death of Mr. Branson at Durham. I have felt deeply moved by the death of such a true gentleman, and he was always so courteous to me in my business relations with him that I would like through you to convey to his family the expressions of my deepest sympathy. I did not have the pleasure of knowing Mr. Branson's family, but my high regard for him prompts me to write you this letter, knowing that you were intimately acquainted with him.

Yours very truly,

S. B. CARY.

*(Southern Sales Agent for Custner, Curran & Bullett.)*

PHILADELPHIA, March 28, 1899.

MR. WILLIAM R. ODELL, Concord, N. C.:\*

DEAR SIR—It was with feelings of sincere regret that I learned of the sad accident to Mr. Branson and of his untimely death. I have felt all day as if a dark shadow had been cast across my path.

We meet many men in business, or in social life, but I have felt since making Mr. Branson's acquaintance that there were few who left so favorable an impression on *every* one who had the pleasure of knowing him.

His frank, cheerful nature made its impress wherever he went.

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\*Written to Mr. W. R. Odell and sent to Mrs. Branson.

While we had not been doing any business with him recently it was a matter of satisfaction to us that we had known him and that our relations had always been so pleasant. His memory will remain with us. I heartily sympathize with his wife and children so suddenly bereft, and to you, who were so close to him, I offer my sincere sympathy.

It is hard for us to understand a Providence of this kind, but as Christians we are forced to bow our heads and believe that God knows best.

Yours very truly,

JAMES L. WILSON,  
(*of Jas. W. Cooke & Co., Philadelphia.*)

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### JOSHUA L. BAILY & Co.

PHILADELPHIA, March 25, 1899.

DURHAM COTTON MANUFACTURING CO., Durham, N. C.:

GENTLEMEN—We telegraphed you this morning as follows:

“We all join you and all your people in deepest sympathy in the irreparable loss of our dear friend, Mr. Branson. Telegraph hour of funeral.”

Yours truly,

[Die. by F. L. B.]

JOSHUA L. BAILY & Co.

Your answer at hand, saying it was necessary for funeral to be held today, which we regret. We should have liked very much to have had the privilege of attending the funeral and in offering this last tribute of our respect.

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\*Sent to Mrs. Branson.

## THE WHITIN MACHINE WORKS.

WHITINSVILLE, MASS., March 28, 1899.

DURHAM COTTON M'F'G CO., East Durham, N. C.:\*

GENTLEMEN—We are very much shocked to learn, through our Mr. Mayes, of the sad accident and death of Mr. Branson. We feel that we, personally, have lost a friend. The writer has valued Mr. Branson's friendship very much for a number of years, and I recollect many pleasant interviews with him.

Will you kindly express to Mrs. Branson and family, my sympathy.

Yours truly,

G. M. WHITIN.

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EAST DURHAM, N. C., April 5, 1899.

MRS. ODELL:\*

DEAR SISTER—East Durham is not as it was prior to March 24. My loss is so great! I never knew until since that date how I loved Bro. Branson. He was as a brother to me and I do miss him so much.

I wish I had some appropriate words of condolence for you. He was "as a brother to me" but a brother to you. And such a noble, manly brother he was. I lived close to him and had the utmost confidence in his religion. I feel that I have a stronger tie in Heaven by his having died.

I have never seen more simple, candid, genuine love for a Church than he exemplified for this Church. A prominent minister in our Conference said to me: "He was the most useful layman in the North Carolina Conference." He is gone, earth is poorer, but I believe that Heaven is

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\*Sent to Mrs. Branson.

richer. We submit to His will, but yet it is so hard to give up one so good and useful.

Will you please tell when he joined the church and who was pastor? I would like to know the name of his parents also. And has he any brothers or sisters except you?

Your brother,

D. N. CAVINESS.

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CARTHAGE, MO., March 27, 1899.

DEAR SISTER BRANSON:

Words cannot express our sympathy for you in your deep sorrow. Though far away we mingle our tears with yours. How glad I would be to pen some word of comfort to you, however little.

The telegram came yesterday evening (Sunday) about four o'clock. It was the *saddest* news that *ever came* to our home. Taken all in all I feel that my *best* friend is gone. How I loved him! Did he know how I *loved, esteemed, and appreciated* him? *I hope he did.* I tried to tell him some times in my letters how I did love him. His letters were always a joy to us all. When they came children and all dropped everything 'till they were read.

He said in his last letter that he hoped to visit us sometime, and somehow I thought it would be so.

We are pouring out our hearts to the Lord that He will comfort and help you and the children. Dear little Annie, that I learned to love better than any child that I ever saw, except my own.

But you do have the sweetest of all comforts—*he was the Lord's.* A noble man; an exceptional character; a follower of the Master. Thank God for the hope of seeing him again. Oh, that you could *know how we sorrow and sympathize with you.* But look up, dear sister, for the Lord's promises will not fail.

These lines fall far below what my heart longs to express, but I send them, praying that the Lord may keep you and yours.

L. L. JOHNSON.

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PUBLISHING HOUSE METHODIST EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH. SOUTH.

NASHVILLE, TENN., March 27, 1899.

MRS. W. H. BRANSON, Durham. N. C.:

DEAR SISTER—Dr. Kilgo has just informed me of the death of your excellent husband. Nothing could have shocked me more. I am quite overwhelmed with the announcement and my heart pours forth its prayerful sympathies for you. None can enter into your environments and into your consciousness and tell all you feel, but we can sympathize and assure you of prayerful and cordial interest for you in this deep sorrow, and then the blessed Lord looks with pitying eye upon you, and the assurance of His word is that His grace is sufficient for you. Lean hard upon him, sister; draw close to the hand that wields the rod, and under the shadowing wings of the Almighty shelter until He shall say "It is enough, come up higher." Then you will regain the loved and the lost in the land of the beautiful and the good. In that bright world the sad word "farewell" will not be heard, for we shall never say good-bye in heaven.

I loved your husband as a younger brother, and I shall miss him when I go to the North Carolina Conference, for it was always pleasant in going to anticipate meeting with him. I know where he is and I know, therefore, where to find him. Let us be true to our integrity and walk with God and we shall re-join him in the sweet by-and-by.

Sympathetically,

J. D. BARBEE.

## STONE MOUNTAIN RAILWAY COMPANY.

WINSTON, N. C., March 27, 1899.

DEAR MRS. BRANSON:

I know full well how little there is in words of sympathy at a time like the present, but having known your late husband since he was a small boy, and having in all these years since that time counted him as my friend, and having rejoiced at his success and usefulness, and predicted for him a long and honorable life with prosperity and happiness, rich in benevolence and in good works, I was greatly grieved at his death, and feel that I would like to express to you and your children my sincere sympathy, and in this expression my family join me. Had I known of his death before his burial, I would have attended his funeral.

Sincerely yours,

G. W. HINSHAW.

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CLOVERTON, ARDMORE, PA., March 24, 1899.

MY DEAR MRS. BRANSON,

I have just received a message over the telephone that I could hardly believe, and cannot yet realize, of the terrible accident at Durham today, and its fatal results this afternoon. I have never had anything to shock me so before, as I left Mr. Branson on Tuesday evening in such perfect health and vigor. I took dinner on Monday evening and breakfast on Tuesday morning with him, and spent most of Tuesday with him, returning from New York in the afternoon, and leaving him at Philadelphia on his train bound for home, and I can only think of him as I saw him then, in his splendid manly strength and with the kindly smile, and the hearty clasp of the hand as he bid me good-

bye, and while I feel very reluctant to intrude upon you at such a sacred time, I cannot forbear to express in a few poor words my deepest sympathy for you in your immeasurable loss. I feel that I have had a great loss in such a friend, and to one who has lost so much more I can sympathize with all my heart.

Mr. Branson leaves a place in this world that cannot be filled, a place in the hearts of his many friends that will always remain, and a memory that will never fade; the memory of an honorable, upright Christian gentleman whose good influence was felt by everyone who knew him, and who leaves this world better than he has lived in it, and as I reverently believe, to receive the reward promised to those who lived as he did.

All our family and all our people join me in offering you our deepest sympathy in this sad hour, and some time, after awhile, I shall hope to see you when I visit your city again. Meanwhile believe me, my dear Mrs. Branson,

Very sincerely,

FREDERICK L. BAILY.

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CHARLOTTE, N. C., March 30, 1899.

MRS. W. H. BRANSON. Durham, N. C.:

MY DEAR MADAM—I was absent from town when the news of the harrowing and untimely death of your husband reached me. Accept, dear madam, in this your hour of sorrow and anguish, my sincerest sympathy and condolence. I also mourn in his death the loss of a kind and genial friend, whom no one ever knew but to love and respect.

While no earthly power can restore to you the kind husband and loving father, yet nevertheless, it must be a



satisfaction to you, although a sad one, to know that he leaves for his posterity a name as bright and unsullied as the noonday sun.

Very respectfully,  
S. WITKOWSKY.

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WILMINGTON, N. C., March 25, 1899.

MY DEAR SISTER BRANSON:

My surprise was exceeded only by my grief when, at 7:45 last night, the messenger handed me a telegram from Bro. Walker stating that Bro. Branson had suddenly been removed from us.

In that hour my heart went up in prayer to the Father that you and your dear children might have strength and grace to sustain you in the dark hour of grief.

Twelve years ago I first met Will Branson, as all familiarly called him, and there has existed ever since a warm friendship which I am glad to say is not limited to time, but extends into the great beyond.

I am well aware of the inadequacy of human words to console you in your grief, and yet I know the high esteem in which your husband was held must be a great source of comfort to you.

While, naturally, your grief is the most poignant, yet there is a host of his true and loyal friends who mourn with you today: for their personal loss is keenly felt.

I will turn my face to the Conference with a sad heart, for he will not be there. For years he has been one of the first to greet me and among the last to say good-bye. Ever since our first meeting I have known him intimately and always set great store by his friendship.

He was a man of sterling worth and integrity, always frank and open in his dealings with men. Indeed did he bare "without abuse that grand old name of gentleman."

The town of Durham, our State, our Conference, are made poorer by his removal and it will be a long time, if ever, before his place can be filled in our Church. While, according to natural life, he lived out but half his days, yet his life was complete because it was ordered according to the divine plan, and in that there is no imperfection.

There are three of you here and two are yonder, and some day the home-bringing of those that remain will re-unite the separated ones "to be forever with the Lord."

I commend you and yours to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May Heaven sustain and give strength in this hour of sore need.

My wife joins me in love and sympathy to you.

Your friend,

JOHN H. HALL.

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GOLDSBORO, N. C., March 24, 1899.

MRS. W. H. BRANSON, Durham, N. C.,

DEAR MADAM—I wish to express my deepest sympathy in this hour of sudden and sore bereavement, when the "waves and billows" of sorrow have gone over you. The news of your husband's death was a great shock to me, and I mourn his loss to his family, to the Church, and to myself personally, for in our association I had been drawn to him in affection.

He was such a true, noble, honorable man, and so faithful and devoted to the church, and so useful in every way. It seems a strange providence that took him, but God is good. Why, we cannot tell, but some day you will know, for I believe all the dealings of our Father with us here will be made plain when we cease to "see through a glass darkly."

Yours is a great loss, but few women have such a husband as you had.

May He who loves you with more than a mother's love, comfort you in this dark, sad hour. Do not trouble to acknowledge this unless it shall be your wish. You will have too many such to answer all.

Yours in sympathy,

F. D. SWINDELL.

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### LINDELL HOTEL.

ST. LOUIS, March 27, 1899.

MRS. W. H. BRANSON, Durham, N. C.:

MY DEAR MADAM—I am just in receipt of a letter from Mr. Morgan, saying he has just received a telegram from Mr. Will Odell, telling him of the sad and unexpected death of Mr. Branson. This is a great shock to me and my heart goes out with deepest sympathy to you and your dear little children in this, your sad affliction. It is not only a great loss to you and family, but Durham loses one of its best citizens; Trinity College and our Church a valued worker and friend, and the State of North Carolina one of its leading manufacturers. God bless and comfort you and children in this, your great loss. I am,

Very sincerely your friend,

J. N. BOHANNON.

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WASHINGTON, N. C., March 25, 1899.

MRS. W. H. BRANSON, Durham, N. C.:

MY DEAR SISTER—I am aware that no human words can comfort your sad heart, but permit me to assure you of my deep sympathy with you in the irreparable loss you have sustained in the death of your noble husband. I have the honor of claiming him as my friend, and when the sad

news of his tragic death reached me it overwhelmed me with deep sorrow and I now join you in your deep grief.

Your husband was greatly beloved by the North Carolina Conference and the whole Church, and nowhere, outside of his own home circle, will he be more sadly missed than by his brethren of the Conference. Be assured that the prayers of his brethren will ascend to Heaven for you in this dark hour. His life was a guarantee that he was ready for the Master's call. "He is not lost, but gone before." Be assured of the prayers and sympathy of his friend and your brother in Christ.

L. L. NASH.

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### McADOO HOUSE.

GREENSBORO, N. C., March 29, 1899.

MY DEAR MADAM:

I cannot tell you with what sorrow I learned of your sad affliction, but want to tell you, you have my deepest sympathy. He alone, in whom Will trusted, can comfort and sustain you. May He ever bless and keep you.

Yours sincerely,

H. E. WEISIGER,  
(*of Richmond, Va.*)

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### SOUTHERN COTTON MILLS.

BESSEMER CITY, N. C., September 13, 1899.

MRS. W. H. BRANSON, Durham, N. C.:

DEAR MRS. BRANSON—I enclose you copy of a resolution adopted at meeting of our Board of Directors yesterday.

Let me add my deep personal endorsement of the resolution, and of more. Mr. Branson was my warm personal friend, and his place in my business gave me an encour-

agement that his simple duties as director could not give. I felt his absence yesterday painfully.

Very respectfully yours,

S. J. DURHAM.

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NEW BERN, N. C., March 31, 1899.

MY DEAR MRS. BRANSON:

It was with profound regret and emotions that were o'er-mastering that I learned of your husband's death.

I knew him well, I admired him for his strict integrity and sterling qualities of mind and heart, I loved him for his gentle, manly ways, I respected him for his courteous bearing and the high position he occupied among his fellowmen.

I feel that I, too, have sustained a loss, I feel that I, too, can mourn with you! My heart is saddened as I write these lines, and unconsciously, almost, I ponder over the past, I see him in the full vigor of a glorious manhood, a bright future before him, a happy home, hosts of admiring friends, and everything to make life pleasant and desirable. I am almost tempted to ask, why is this? But the answer would come, the Master has called, his work is done, his mission is over.

With you it is a day of sorrow, with him a day of joy. You put on the emblems of mourning, you grieve for him; for him it is a coronation day. Only a little while, only a little way—just across the river—a few years, maybe a few days—and you will meet him, that meeting by the river of life, that meeting within the pearly walls of the New Jerusalem, that meeting at the feet of the Christ, that meeting will be far more joyous, far more glorious; for you meet to part no more.

My wife joins with me in love and sympathy and prays that the great God may comfort and bless you.

Sincerely,

L. H. CUTLER.

SAN LUIS POTOSI, MEX., March 27, 1899.

MY DEAR JOHN:\*

This morning's paper tells of the tragical death of Bro. Branson: I am greatly distressed. We have lost an exceedingly good and valuable man.

Please express to his wife my sympathy with her in such a trying experience.

He helped me in the work here by a special contribution.

Affectionately,

W. W. DUNCAN,

(*Bishop M. E. Church South.*)

NASHVILLE, TENN., April 20, 1899.

MY DEAR MADAM AND SISTER:

My heart went out to you in deepest sympathy when I heard of the great, great sorrow that has come upon you. It is a sorrow whose bitterness no one can fully understand. It is a sorrow I cannot explain. I can only sympathize and pray that you may now feel the presence of the crucified and risen Jesus, who was himself a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. May you feel the clasp of his arms that are strong enough and tender enough to embrace all who mourn.

Mrs. Fitzgerald joins in this prayer. I am,

Your brother in the one hope,

O. P. FITZGERALD,

(*Bishop M. E. Church, South.*)

\*Written to Dr. Kilgo and sent to Mrs. Branson.



